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MONSIEUR NICOLAS

or

THE HUMAN HEART UNVEILED

THE THIRD VOLUME

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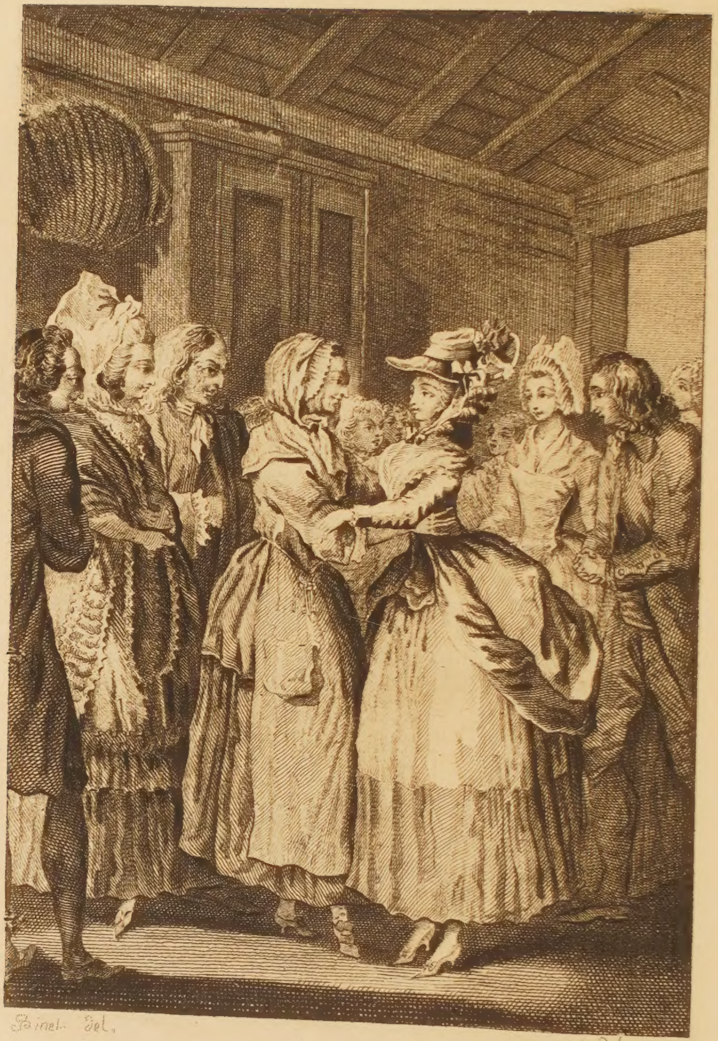

Binet del.

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MONSIEUR NICOLAS

or

THE HUMAN HEART UNVEILED

The Intimate Memoirs of

RESTIF DE LA BRETONNE

Translated into English by

R. CROWDY MATHERS

Edited with an Introduction by

HAVELOCK ELLIS

VOLUME III

DISCARD

for subscribers only

JOHN RODKER · LONDON · MCMXXX

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[*The illustrations projected for* Monsieur Nicolas *by Restif de la Bretonne were never carried out. A list of them will be found at the end of each of Restif's volumes. The illustrations listed above have been taken from other works of the author depicting scenes similar to, or identical with, those cited in* Monsieur Nicolas.]

THE

FOURTH EPOCH

Continued

1753-1754

FOURTH EPOCH

(continued)

I TOOK dancing lessons for six months, that is to say, up to July 1754. I learned the *Minuet*, the *Passepied*, the *Bretagne*, the *Ancienne Allemande,* the *Matelote*, the *Sabotière*, and the *Aimable Vainqueur*, a dance of fine airs and graces in the manner of *Vestris* and *Gardel.* The passepied is a sort of minuet in bad style; but the step which is called *passepied* still occurs in all the dances performed at the Opera. . . . The Bretagne is half minuet and half steps from the rigadoon: "battues," "chassés," "entrechats" and "passepied": it is a preparation for quadrilles, the Ancienne Allemande, and all other character dances. The "Ancienne" Allemande is dull compared to the new, which was not known at that time. The Matelote and the Sabotière are still danced. The Aimable Vainqueur is in the old style – very stiff and formal, majestic, technically clever, tedious – a dance such as the elder Vestris used to perform masked. It is a sort of pantomime in which the lover entreats his mistress for her favours, and finally wins them; and after this it becomes voluptuous, indecent even, after the manner of Negro dances. The conquest achieved, the victor expresses his triumph in gay and lively steps, in the style of Dauberval. All these dances came easily to me, owing to my natural lightness; and it was this same lightness which led the Dutchman to show them to me, though he refused to prostitute and discredit them by teaching them to my heavier-footed compatriots. He was delighted by my aptitude, which was unique in his experience, and during my last months with him, while he was training me for the Aimable Vainqueur, he used to take me to see the other three dancing teachers of the town, Mme Maris, and MM. Calais and Fiévé, and show me off proudly, making me perform solo, or with a partner (usually Mme Pernon, whom he had trained to dance with me). "I am only a foreigner," he would say, "and you despise me; but show me pupils like that!"

One day Mme Maris observed to my Dutch dancing-master: "If I had trained him he would have more elegance and polish; more the style of a decent citizen; I would not have given him the air of a soldier turned fop as you have done." "Ah, his style is all right for a Paris Duchess," answered my master laughing, "even if it is not quite the thing for provincial townsfolk." And, as a matter of fact, I had acquired an air and manner which, had I not kept them for the ballroom, would have made me unrecognisable to my former intimates. In spite of Mme Maris's criticism (with which, wrongly, many people did not agree) my dancing made me a welcome partner and one sought after by all the best dancers; I became the hero of the ballroom I usually frequented; my entrance caused a flutter in the assembly; a girl was flattered when I asked her to be my partner, and, if it was for a minuet, she made it a long one. (The form of the other dances was fixed.) And those girls who did not dance so well showed me even more respect. Had I not been placed as I was, I could have had the hand and heart of the two richest and prettiest butchers' daughters in the town, thanks to my light feet and foppery.

For nearly fourteen months my note-books are filled with records of my *choreographic* prowess. . . . However, I went on with my *Fastes*, from which

I excluded all such frivolities, confining these to my Latin notes. At the height of my frivolity I realised a truth which is not without value to the thinker: namely, that a man's passion for women loses in intensity when he is mixing with a great many people; so that, of all monks, the Carthusians are those who should most ardently desire them and suffer most from their privation. But if dissipation impairs our devotion towards the sex, it increases our boldness. . . . At this time I was avoiding Mme Parangon; I had found strength to do so, although my passion for her was unabated. She seemed delighted with my behaviour; probably because she might have found herself in a vexatious position had I done otherwise; moreover, she regarded it as the result of her express command, for, when occasion offered, convincing proof was always forthcoming that I adored her still. My conversations alone with her did not leave such a strong impression now that I mixed daily with pretty girls; as, for instance, the elder Mlle Ferrand, Mlle Dhall, Mlle Léger, and, above all, Mlle Douy. Also, after coming into contact with so many girls inferior to Madelon, to Manon Prudhot, to Edmée Servigné, and especially to the celestial Colette, I saw less of the goddess in woman. . . . Yet everything was leading me towards that great catastrophe which, in its remote effects, decided, finally and for ever, my fate, my fortunes and the course of my life. . . .

As I had now acquired ease in my *Fastes*, I paused to await the actual mental attitude of the final achievement before describing it. Therefore I had plenty of time on my hands, and devoted it to the composition of another poem, which was in the manner of Lucretius, though I was not then acquainted with his work. It is an astonishing thing (at least, if it is not a very ordinary experience) and one that I have often noticed since, how much I had in common, not only in thought but in conduct, with philosophers of Antiquity who were strangers to me, such as Socrates, Epicurus, Lucretius, etc.

My poem, *De la Nature des Choses*, had been begun on the 14th of October, 1753. This is the Latin title which I at first gave it: *De iis Rebus quas reputat esse veras de Deo, Essentia Boni et Mali, Religione, etc. Gallicum Poema Nicolai Annæ Edmundi Augustini Restifii Saxiacensis-Bretonnæi, inceptum 14 Octobris 1753. . . .*

On this date I only wrote four lines. Ideas failed me, or rather a knowledge of how to express them; a blind ferment of ideas was my only guide to truth. Also, drunk as I was with the passions, my brain was scarcely free enough to engage in metaphysics. I tried to take up the subject again during my enthusiasm for dancing, but only got as far as the thirty-sixth line, and then put it aside altogether, not to return to it until the 3rd of January, 1755, after my friend Loiseau's arrival. Then I took advantage of the knowledge I had acquired, either from conversations with Gaudet d'Arras, somewhat beyond my understanding before Loiseau had taught me the elements, or from my daily conversations with the latter, or from the various books which both of them, acting independently, had put within my reach, and finished my poem on the 4th of the following March at seven o'clock, *ante cœnam.*

> *O sovereign Being, seed of all Nature, unmixed Essence fecund in each created thing, that in the time ordained for expansion had power to modify yourself in every element; productive Virtue, from whose breast Olympus and the Earth and all things else were born; O You that made me also; You that such divers errors have hidden below deceitful veils from us; if an audacious desire moves me to sing you, it is that I may show forth the source of all our lives. Since you are Truth itself, we cannot please you by imagining attributes for you, since, under the thick mask that hides you from our unexplaining eyes, our*

hearts perceive you better. From you alone we draw our life and being, and it is by knowledge of us you may be known. All beings come from you, yourself in substance but more perfect Being, you, Being in the Highest. And from your issue, Man in his turn comes forth, and all things made for him were made before him, just as each new Season calls forth the caterpillar from the egg, that tube which shall be a butterfly, to crawl and devour the green of those trees Spring brings to leaf to feed him. So Nature's chief, like an exuberant ferment, animates and forms Olympus and the Earth and all the Beasts, being coterminous with the Universe. At first their substance is enclosed in his seed, then it feels itself become warmer; this divine germ creates nothing as it develops, but only grows greater; for the God is all-comprehending, all-developing; in him each thing participates: the oak is in the acorn, the bird in the egg (as the Universe in God, since nothing has ever been made new); bone, feather and flesh, the nerves and substance of the bird, the bird that seems to draw its life therefrom. But, ah, how long has not blind man delayed in coming to the truth, and what a strange picture has he not painted of his origin! Come and learn, O Mortal, that your God is yourself; Man is an emanation of this supreme Being, who makes all: as part of him, you love him in loving yourself, and hurt him in hurting yourself. Learn, then, the respect you owe your being. . . . Man is ever ingenious to torment himself, and therefore makes it a crime to worship a pair of handsome eyes. Fool that he is, he still does not realise that in loving them he is adoring God. Happy would he be indeed if he could pass his days in the breast of innocence and pure affection! But do not think that if vice, which seems to trouble and upset this satisfying order, were to be banished, the order would be improved: everything that is is good, and evil can renew our ardour, our desire for a good taken with trembling hands and otherwise most certainly less pleasant. Let none be offended by such a doctrine; clear sense will applaud it, even if it wound the ear. Man is a river, returning at last by a long circuit to the moving centre whence he flowed. Till then he is troubled; he finds no rest until the death he fears gives him its sanctuary.

This is enough to give an impression of the verse. But before proceeding to an analysis of my poem I must express my astonishment at the ideas expounded therein: ideas I thought out for myself, without help, without instruction – I, who only lived for and by women! These lines were written thirty years ago, this 20th February, 1784, and forty years ago this 17th March, 1794 (27 Ventôse, year 2). The system which I conceived, before I had even talked to Gaudet d'Arras, was similar to that of Spinoza. Yet I had never read Spinoza or Epicurus; Nature, and Nature only, was speaking within me. My intelligence, as it developed, sought for the truth, found it, recognised it, and fastened on to it. We shall see by-and-bye what exquisite pleasures truth has at times bestowed upon me. . . .

The last lines, expressive though harsh, indicate that I had consulted Gaudet d'Arras and that Loiseau had arrived. I continue: "*Everything is for the best, since Eternal Law is equally good whether it produces evil or good. A constant condition would become monotonous, if it were unalterable; desire ceases for a good possessed; it burns for a good which is unattainable. . . . Man, issuing from God, seeks reunion with Him from his birth: hence his restlessness, his vain search for happiness; hence his wild and contradictory ideas upon Nature and the godhead, whose simple but sublime principle he cannot grasp. Feeling himself imperfect, he who has issued from perfection, he seeks Perfection and Happiness, and finds them finally in death. . . . Therefore all is for the best, even death itself. Think not, O Mortals, that God is different in nature from man and from every other creature. Think not we are his subjects and bound to worship Him as abject slaves! This is a fatal error; it has brought ruin upon the world; fanaticism is founded upon it and has profited by it to bow our necks beneath the yoke of superstition; love, and not fear, is religion. . . . Shall we never realise that that is our essence, the germ in metals, beasts and men? . . .*" From physics I pass on to ethics: "*What shall I say about those laws whose authority forges a barrier against human crime? Let us give thanks for them: for by them our goods and our lives are made secure; through them man may enjoy the fruits of his labour, which otherwise robbers would* *ravish from him. Though everything has its sanction and evil is only relative, crime is none the less real as between members of one society, and none the less punishable by its laws.* (Please God, that this truth may curb our young and foolish atheists!) . . . *Yet crime does not exist in the sight of God – a dangerous truth, if truth could be dangerous; but only falsehood is dangerous. . . . Yet how many abuses I see in these beneficent laws! Not one of them but carries, side by side with its usefulness, penury, privation and slavish fear. . . . For Man never creates anything, but only rearranges the distribution of good and evil. Among the lawgivers of the various nations who have tried to reform bad customs by the promulgation of constructive social laws, how many have only succeeded in pejorating their stupid mistakes? . . . Give Moses and Lycurgus their tribute of admiration; but let History be their judge. The one took care to hide from his people's eyes, to forbid them under pain of death to approach the place where the Eternal revealed His mysteries, and to choose his time when the thunders rolled, so that the astounded Jew might believe that God Himself was speaking from the lightning. For the other, his laws produced a savage people; he flattered their pride, but he only took away the property of the rich, made all wealth to be held in common and coined money out of iron in order to prevent them, in their treacherous prosperity, from laying greedy hands upon the State. Moreover, this vile tyrant of Elos was unjust, bending the necks of fellow Greeks under the yoke, making the vanquished Helots beasts of burden and destroying their title to the name of Man. . . . But what is this I see, fellow mortals? A wiser man comes to put the final touch to Law. Who can read the Gospels without admiring Christ? He knows how to change the heart and make it tractable. Who better tamed his own passions and showed us how to subjugate ours? He went to the root of the matter. To arrest crime we must strive against evil desires, and, suffering for our neighbours, must patiently meet evil with helpful kindness. It is true that, by following this law of wisdom, a man may tranquilly watch the coming of old age: but* *it is equally true that one who is lazy and indifferent to the arts, given to idleness and waiting upon chance, will degenerate. . . . Thus lust is a necessity: it alone arouses man and makes him think; in fact, prevents him from remaining what he is, and from being what Christ, in reforming men, would have had him be. We have not followed his teaching in the least, but we have been clever enough to raise his divine standard on high, while changing or outraging his austere ethic, and falsifying it scandalously at every point. . . . How has this come about? A depraved Christian merely adopts the mask of virtue, and undermines the foundations of doctrine in his own interest, so that the law ends in a myriad abuses. Let us return to the natural man; let us be loyal to the one Reason, and follow its laws without swerving, and let not our opinions interfere with those of our fellows. Let us have a Religion in appearance, in the shadowy borderland of superstition. Let us be gentle, tolerant and of a wholesome morality, so will truth be made manifest."* Finally, I perorate somewhat in these words: *"I shall not go astray; for step by step, I shall follow Nature, my sure guide. . . . Yet if anyone thinks differently from myself, I shall not criticise him, I shall respect his beliefs. If a dogma leads towards supreme happiness, by that alone it is the very truth. Many roads go towards this goal: if vice led there, it would be virtue; the only difference being that pleasures will escort the wise man on his journey. Therefore let us avoid evil, because it is disorder; there is no happiness when the law can attack us. We live under laws, and who wishes to frustrate their authority will have misery and shame for wages. But even if these did not exist, if you harmed others, they would harm you in return. In truth there is but one law: morality is the only thing worthy of consideration; dogmas and opinions are mere balderdash. Personal interest, in its diverse forms, has always been the foundation of morality. . . . Everything is for the best, everything is good; and it is a work of supererogation to try to reform what is not an abuse."*

Such was the doctrine that I developed for myself amid tumultuous passions. Its fundamental principles were derived from no one but myself; for when I began my poem, Gaudet d'Arras had only given me instruction concerning women. But after I had shown him my exordium, seeing that I was not without philosophical ideas, he fostered these, and implanted the bases of that system of physics which I included in the *Paysan-Paysanne*: the same theory which will be more lucidly expounded in an article called *Ma Physique*, at the end of this work, for which reason I do not more insist upon it here. Loiseau, who saw my poem later, did not disapprove of it. He made me read the *Essay on Man*, wherein the rhymester Pope has assembled the ideas of the philosopher *Bolingbrocke*; also he got me Cyrano de Bergerac and other books. He found me weeping over Cyrano, and asked in surprise what it was that had so affected me! "Ah," I replied, "alone I discovered truths which I now find others hold! So it really was truth!" Loiseau smiled, and thereafter would talk to me of nothing but Ethics and sane philosophy. It did not take long to initiate me into the latter science, but my passions were too strong for him to take me very far: still he gave me a taste for it, or rather he made me conscious of what taste I had by nature. . . . If Buisson had still been in the town, he would have been certain to enjoy my poem; seeing that it made so strong an impression on Gaudet the clerk that, one day, he said quite seriously: "Form a sect with yourself at the head, and I will be your first disciple." "My friend, vegetate, propagate, and do not think . . .", such was my answer to this vigorous lad. It is noteworthy that my verses, though harsh, are full of matter; their harshness was the result of the rustic education, not of myself only, but of all the young men I mixed with, even in the town. What chance had I of acquiring elegance and suavity of expression in that part of the country, when even at Lyons (now Ville-affranchie) an affectation of coarseness was a mark of breeding, even in women? . . . But let us return to the date when I took up my poem again, that is to say to the 30th of January, 1754. . . . We are coming to the most important events of my youth, the ones which influenced all the rest of my life.

There was a fine masquerade at the Carnival that year; but I do not know if its matter could be called innocent. This was the plot or subject of the drama:

A pretty townswoman, that Mme Villetard who was a friend of Toinette, had, so it was said, boxed her husband's ears, because he scolded her a little too crudely for some affair of gallantry. Now in our part of the world, in the country districts and even in the provincial towns, it is an unpardonable degradation for a husband to be hit by his wife, even should he beat her for it afterwards: for by this it is presumed that he is fundamentally incapable of being head in his own house, that he is inept in all he does, and, consequently, an object for contempt. Therefore, to frighten other husbands, justice is done to him on Shrove Tuesday. He is taken in procession through the town in a sort of Thespian chariot if he can be caught in person; if not, some one represents him, dressed as he is usually dressed, and masked to resemble him. His wife is played by a young man (as were all female parts in ancient comedy), dressed in the costume she wore on the day of her misdemeanour and with a mask to match; he imitates her figure, bearing and even her mannerisms. Nothing was spared to make this Aristophanic Comedy perfect, as the players came from among the leading townspeople. The scene is faithfully represented: the actors, public upon their chariot, use the same words, exchange the same insults, and the blow is delivered. . . . At this point the shouts of the populace are very much more like the *bravos* in our present-day theatres than the rhythmical applause which greeted the end of a play among the Ancients. After the farce has been played in one quarter, the troupe goes to another. On this occasion the whole town was covered, for the scene was excellently acted by Pierrefitte and Dupile; supported by Blonde, Maine's brother, Desfourneaux, Champmartin, Merme, Chardon, etc. His wig, combined with his beauty, made Pierrefitte so like Mme Villetard that the illusion was perfect. The box on the ear was followed by an explanation of the masquerade, delivered, with most amusing pantomime, by Blonde, a friend of the family. Other friends acted their parts well, especially a certain Richebourg, who played the counter-scene with a chambermaid, little Champmartin. The frolic continued till nightfall. A lawsuit brought by the victims against the jesters is the usual sequel to these masquerades, and the town finds this second farce quite as diverting as the first.

I followed the troupe of masked buffoons with everyone else for a part of the afternoon, acting as escort to the five Dlles Morillon (sisters and cousins), Mme Pernon, a widow, and Mlle Douy; so that everyone we met called me the *Cock-with-seven-hens*. With the coming of twilight we were separated by a bloody encounter between the Players and the relatives and friends of their victims, who fell unexpectedly upon the maskers, shouting: "Ho, scoundrels!" But the numbers were unequal, and the attacking party were rolled head over heels and well trounced; and, as they were the aggressors, they had the further annoyance of losing the suit they instituted later.

About five o'clock, in the Rue de Paris opposite Notre-Dame là-d'hors, I caught sight of Edmée and Catherine with some of the girls from their quarter, following a vine-dresser who was beating a drum. I went up to them, and Catherine took my arm, saying: "You are coming to celebrate Shrovetide with us?" Edmée took my other arm, and we walked towards their house. Opposite the *Rue des Jesuites* a vine-dresser (was it the same as at Vaux?) hit me violently on the arm. I faced about, and saw five or six more of them, their light sticks raised, on the point of falling upon me. Edmée screamed; Catherine dropped my arm and in a trice had boxed the ears of three or four of them. I kept my eye on the brute who had hit me, but made not the slightest movement; so that, in a moment, the unsuspecting Edmée let me leave go of her hand. Then I hurled myself over the twenty paces that separated me from my prey, and with such violence that the impact knocked him head over heels and he served me as a sledge on the trampled snow. However the sisters prevented me from profiting by my advantage; and the fellow confined himself to the cowardly trick of throwing stones at me from the rampart where he had taken refuge. I wanted to leave the two sisters after having seen them home; but they kept me to have supper with their father, who gave me a reception similar to my welcome at Puitsdebond.

On this evening I spoke seriously about my two cousins, the sons of my mother's sister. Catherine praised them as steady-looking lads, and then, because her heart was pure, blushed till she was like a cherry in mid-June. I went on to say that the brothers were my good friends, and both of such excellent character that I knew none more deserving: "Moreover," I continued, "they come of one of the most respectable families in the district on their father's side, and their mother's people are of noble blood . . ." (it would hardly be believed what an impression this detail made upon the good vine-dressers, father and daughters alike!). I dilated upon the fine qualities of my late grandfather, Nicolas Ferlet, and my words so pleased the good old man that he exclaimed with emotion: "Ah, how sorry I am I never met such a fine man!" I replied that my father was his worthy counterpart, and that if he would allow me to present my cousins, my father himself would introduce them. The old man answered that he would be much honoured, and would be glad to meet my cousins. He assumed that I was acting in concert with both his daughters, whereas I really only had an understanding with Catherine. As for Edmée, my intention was definitely to make her my cousin rather than my wife; but as yet I had said no word of this, by reason of a certain covert plan which will be disclosed by-and-bye.

I had lost Madelon. Mme Parangon had reverted to her plan of giving Mlle Fanchette to me, doubtless for one of the reasons which made me want to give Edmée to my younger cousin, Bertrand Mairat. She avoided me through a care for her virtue, and I her through vexation of heart and because of other distractions; also because I was afraid of destroying all hope of winning her sister, though really I loved Fanchette much more for the sake of my parents who idolised her, than on my own account. . . . My liking for dancing had become a passion; it kept me from my books, took me out of myself, and away from the house, thereby diminishing my chances of seeing Colette alone. I loved her as passionately as ever, but I had more to distract me. Moreover the freedoms of the ballroom made my sensibilities less delicate. Every day I saw indecent liberties taken with women, and listened to conversation no less obscene for being veiled; every evening I met girls who were practically prostitutes, such as the two sisters Guigner and Tonton Lenclos; little Bouzon, sister of a bargee and Slim Soulless, sister of the Moutré who was nicknamed

Soulless; Goton Chôvot, the Chapotins, who were dressmakers, and even Mlle Brochart, the hangman's daughter, who was not disdained by foreign journeymen. All the girls made advances to me, especially the Guigners and Tonton, and grew more provocative when I remained indifferent. Yet my senses were troubled. Pretty Manon Léger was most voluptuous to look at, taken as a whole, and I found her very desirable; she met me more than half-way and I let myself go. . . . I should have gone even farther with her had I been really dissolute, and had it not been for my short and ardent attachment to Colombe: and, in a word, had I not preferred the elder Ferrand and pretty Dhall and Mlle Douy. It was numbers that prevented me from giving myself wholeheartedly to one. No impression ever went deep enough. I never visited any of these girls at home; I only met them in the ballrooms, or in the country round, or on the public promenades.

It was about this time that Gonnet succeeded in bringing about his proposed party with little Marianne Lagneau and Tonton Lenclos. As both Marianne (who was his stepmother's chambermaid) and I had to be very careful, we chose a remote district. Gonnet had his Tonton and I had Marianne, a little brunette who seemed naturally well-behaved, but whom the wanton Tonton had managed to lead astray. And this was scarcely to be wondered at, as little Marianne's stepmother lived behind the *Consuls*, which was like another world and one into which the evil reputation of Tonton had not yet penetrated. Also, it was an unfrequented quarter, and the two girls were never seen there together. . . . The party was a complete debauch. After we had eaten, we waited for evening before returning. Tonton would not yield to Gonnet unless her friend did as much with me; so she did more than I myself to win me Marianne's favours, scolding and caressing by turns: "You little bitch, are you going to pretend to be squeamish?" she exclaimed; and a moment later: "Dear good Marianne, you will find it not unpleasant; he is a fine lad, and will not get you into any kind of trouble. . . . Listen," and she told her something I may not here repeat; but that evening I learned a criminal precaution from Gonnet and Tonton. This melted the girl, already a little heated with wine by Tonton, who had added white to the red while pretending it was water. As for the precaution, I did not use it then, and have never used it, not even with Toinette! . . .

No adventure could have been more injurious to my character at this particular time. It was the 12th of March, one of the first fine days of Spring; and it was Madelon's anniversary Sunday. (I only remembered this afterwards, and shed tears of repentance and regret; for not only did I fail to keep it in commemoration of my first wife, but insulted her memory in the most criminal manner!) . . . I only overcame Marianne's resistance with the greatest difficulty, at least the first time: but afterwards, pricked on by Tonton (who said to her: "Don't you play the prude so as to be able to say wicked things about me later on!") and by Gonnet, an extremely lecherous Avignonais; and by pleasure too, she abandoned herself utterly to me. There were moments when, touched by her tears, I was on the point of leaving the girl in peace. Then Tonton, looking ready to tear my eyes out, ran up and teased and excited us, and compelled our organs to debauchery: a very she-devil, she could not let any human creature remain innocent. . . . Gonnet looked on, laughing foolishly. My little brunette, brought into line at last, was the first to kiss Tonton, and make friends again. Lenclos, the blonde, was so far gone in depravity that, for a quarter of an hour, she played at whipping Marianne, giving us an exhibition of the most provocative attitudes. . . . Desire revived. Then in a whisper she suggested that I should ask Gonnet to change partners. I was horrified by such an excess of license, but contented myself with saying that, if such a thing happened, she would lose all hope of marrying her lover; and he was a good enough fellow, a stranger to the town, and not too sensitive. She saw my point and went back to her partner; while I took Marianne again. . . . We returned at last under cover of darkness.

The following week it was very mild. One evening, not finding partners who suited me in any of the four ballrooms, I felt inclined for a lonely walk. As I was going down the *Rue de la Cloche Bleue*, I met Tonton's brother. We had not as yet spoken to each other. Lenclos accosted me politely and asked me if I would take a turn with him. I disliked the idea, but had not the courage to refuse. I would have preferred to be alone, but how could I respond to his civility by saying: "I do not want your company"? We followed the top of the rampart which runs between the *Porte-de-Paris* and *Porte d'Égléeny*: that is to say, the one opposite to that faced by M. Servigné's house, and enclosing the Grandcaire, another quarter peopled by vine-tenders. Lenclos talked about his sister; he extolled her charms and good behaviour, and declared that she loved me. He added that she was M. Parangon's cousin and that, if I married her, it would be a useful protection. . . . I had said nothing as yet, when, as we were passing a ruined bastion, we heard voices. Lenclos went up to see who it was. . . . Coming back, he whispered: "It is a girl with a man. We are two and he is alone; we must have her!" "Why disturb other people's pleasures?" I answered. "Perhaps they are lovers who are going to be married, or who want to force their family's consent. Let us go on." "No, no! At least let us see who they are! Gad! It will be amusing!" With the heedlessness of youth

I seconded Lenclos, and we ran into the bastion cursing and swearing. "Get out," said a man's voice, which was not unknown to me. "Only persons of no breeding disturb a man when he is with a lady." These words made me shrink into myself. "Let us go!" I repeated to Lenclos. "He is right. Let us leave people in peace who have need of peace." "I am agreeable," he answered, "but only on condition that I know who the girl is. Otherwise I'll have the whole *Grandcaire* on top of them." Thereupon he began to talk so loudly that the girl said to the man: "My God, I am lost!" But Lenclos was pitiless, and at this moment we heard five or six people coming towards us. "Be quiet, be quiet!" I said to Lenclos. But he laughed at my remonstrances. The people we had heard came up to us. It was Edmée and Catherine with their father; they had just been supping in *Grandcaire* with Père Mailhot, a wealthy vine-tender and relative of theirs, and were on their way home, escorted by their host and his two sons-in-law, the hunch-back surgeon Lesseré and Chindé, a cooper. Catherine recognised me: "What are you doing here?" she asked. "I was taking a walk with this gentleman" (and I pointed to Lenclos). "Yes," said Lenclos, "I think very highly of Monsieur Nicolas. . . . But listen – there is a girl of doubtful virtue in here with a man, and I want to know who she is." "Let them be, let them be!" said Catherine. "Who does evil will find evil." But the two sons-in-law of Père Mailhot were of the same opinion as Lenclos, and all three entered the bastion. The girl was trying to hide; but they caught hold of her hand, and bore her, like a captive bird, into the light of Catherine's lantern. It was Lenclos's sister! . . . The poor wretches to whom Perseus showed Medusa's head were not more petrified than this imprudent young man! He was suffocated with indignation, amazement, grief and rage. . . . "What harm were we doing?" said a man coming out of the bastion. And this man was M. Parangon! "My little cousin and I were together, and hearing steps, turned into the bastion, as we did not want to be seen in company at such an hour. Unfortunately we continued talking, and some impertinent busybody overheard us. . . . That is all. . . ." I remarked that this was the only possible explanation, and Catherine agreed, at the same time making a sign behind her back to her two cousins-in-law. Lenclos exhausted himself in apologies to his cousin Parangon, and then we left him to continue his walk with his lady cousin, while we turned back the way we had come and walked with the Servignés. Lenclos made no way with the sisters, although he was very handsome and courted them ardently; and still less with their father: they had heard a tale about him of a sort to make them by no means anxious for his closer acquaintanceship. It was Catherine who one day gave me a hint as to its nature, for Edmée would never have let such a thing pass her lips: *Credebatur mater ejus, nati pulchritudine capta, concubitum illius appetiisse.* I believe this was a calumny; but the rumour was widespread, and probably helped to keep the sisters free to play their part in my cherished plan: for Lenclos fell desperately in love with Edmée and, had he been purer in himself and less dishonoured by his sister, I have no doubt that he would have been given the preference over my younger cousin, whom Edmée had not as yet even seen.

After I had left Lenclos, whom I did not spare, and was on my way home, I reflected on M. Parangon's adventure and added thereto all that I knew of the same sort: what Gonnet and Tourangeot had told me about Mme Yeury; what I had myself seen of his fancy for Reine II, that ugly but well-made chambermaid; what he had done to Marie, whom he intended for Tourangeot; his attempt on Tiennette; the condition in which he had sent away Manon the rubber, and his plan of making me a disgraceful present of her: a plan which only failed because it proved impossible; a certain occasion on which I had seen him slip his hand up young Corhaux's skirts; and from all these facts I concluded – far from correctly! – that Mme Parangon would have a right to be unfaithful, and that a little boldness on my part to bring this about would be no more than a just retribution on the gross Parangon. Thus I set myself up as retributer, who was myself almost as guilty as he; and from that moment watched my opportunity of being alone with Colette. And this disastrous opportunity arrived at last. . . .

On Saturday the 25th of March I went to bed resolved to push my point, and during the night I had a dream, which, by its charm, increased my madness. I did not put it into verse, as I reserved my vein for the *Fastes* and for my poem *On the Nature of Things*. The description of it in my fourth note-book begins with an exclamation: "*Thrice happy dream! First you gave me money* (of which I was greatly in need, having become dandified and spendthrift since I had frequented the ballrooms); *then you put into my arms that pretty girl who lives with Monsieur Borne, the attorney* (*Naturelle Borne,* the natural sister of *Borne aux Remords,* Pierrefitte, and Desfourneaux, and consequently Madame L3n1rd's niece); *and finally you procured for me the supreme favour from Annette Bourdeaux. And that was not all: you brought me into the presence of Colette; I spoke to her and she listened to me; her hand had already pressed mine. . . . O Dream, why did you not cling to Sleep more closely? Why did you not dismiss the Waking which drove you from me as she was pressing my hand? . . . O d'Arras! Why did you come with your Reality to ravish away my sweet Illusion? As long as your amorous Mélanie* (the brunette L . . . in an access of hysteria) *kept to her prelude, I thought myself with the chaste Colette;*

the too corporeal pleasures which were afterwards her gift frightened the divine image into flight; it vanished like the fragile clouds brought from the South by stormy Autumn." Then I add: "*Heram deamo, et potiri nimis differo! . . .*"*

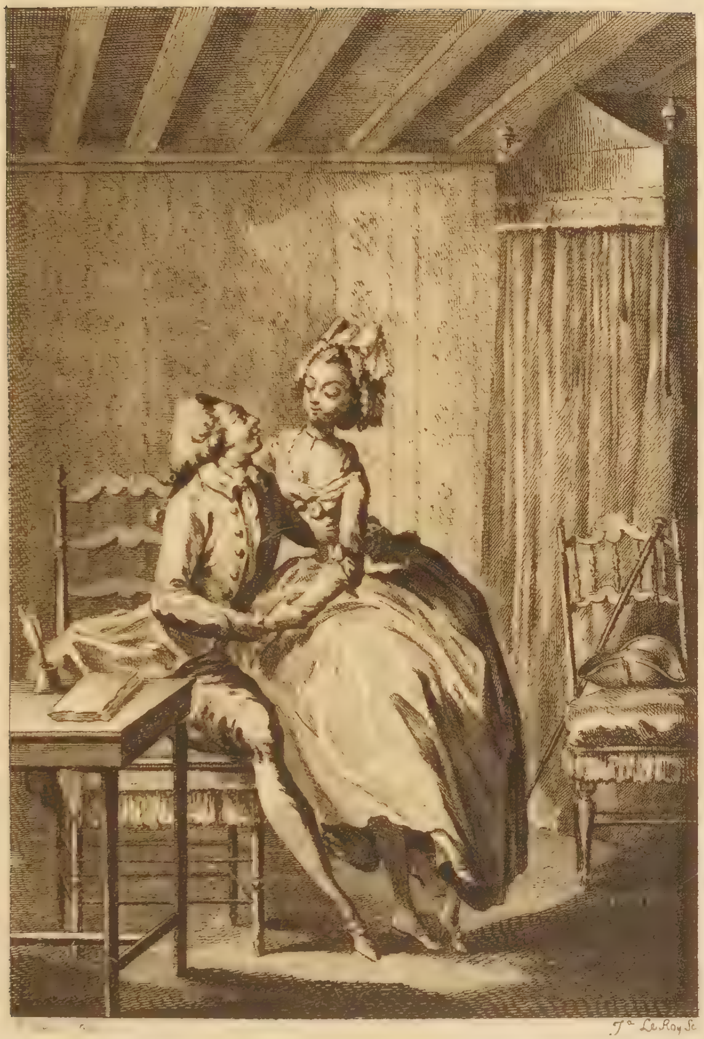
I wrote this on the morning of Sunday the 26th, and then went out to attend High Mass, wanting to catch Gaudet. Not finding him at Saint-Renobert, I grew bored and went to hear the music at the Cathedral. In the intervals of the singing I looked at the Epitaphs, and the reading of them threw me into a profound reverie. I sat down on the edge of the circular space behind the Choir. There I meditated, and my ideas grew clearer. While thus engaged I chanced to turn my head, and saw just

*Here I must make two observations. In my youth I slept very deeply, and was almost a somnambulist: if I was roused suddenly from a dream, it was long before I could free myself from the illusion; and even if I woke naturally, my waking did not at once destroy it. But with reference to these actualities which I have mentioned, procured by Gaudet d'Arras: what motive had he, and why did he procure them? In the first place because he was my friend. He was not fully aware of my resources in the matter of women, and feared the destructive vice of masturbation. He was not jealous of me, and when he was overburdened with favours, managed to get me accepted in his place, by promising that my partner should not be recognised. My proved discretion and natural modesty made him bold to use me thus. D'Arras wanted to glut me with women, to free me of my mania for the deeper loves, thinking these would be my ruin. To accomplish this end, he would even have given me his Manon, if no one else had been available. He loved me for myself. While I had Madelon (for he discovered our relationship by means of his key to the wetting-room) he did nothing for me in this way: but from the moment that he thought I was alone, through his efforts I had, at one time and another, the beautiful brunette *des Remords*, Goton Hollier, and the chambermaid Nannette Prévôt; also Madame L3n1rd's chambermaid, Marianne Geolin, sister of Lelong's mistress, and two or three others whom I did not recognise. . . . Nevertheless his conduct was most extraordinary, and doubtless his personal licentiousness played a considerable part in it: he was a monk, and consequently outstepped all bounds. If, in the *Paysan-Paysanne* I have not charged my Cordelier with all these facts, it is because the truth was not credible. Here I must tell the truth and nothing but the truth, even if it is improper. There I had only to describe the mind of a strange corrupter, an atheist through rabid hatred of monasticism; a good friend none the less, but one who, wanting to push two fine, strong creatures as far as they could go, used them as the subjects of an experiment: that is the d'Arras of the *Paysan*. Here, on the contrary, I must give facts. When it is finished, this work will be unique.

behind me the name *Guillain,* 1540, in Gothic character perfectly preserved. Thoughts came more swiftly: I reflected on all those whose names were written here, and who were now no more; I understood and felt the nothingness of death and life, with that sweet melancholy which the Romans fostered at their feasts before giving themselves over to debauch: "Since life is short," said Trimalchio, displaying a skeleton to his guests, "we must make haste to enjoy it." Such was my state of mind when I left the Church. I went down to the banks of the river, where Nature reborn displayed her blossoming flowers and the half-opened buds of later trees. A strong charm was about me; I returned to dinner drunken with it.

On leaving the table everyone began to get ready for the promenade. I went up to the printing-room, and got out my book of translations, which was afterwards destroyed through an accident. (I lent it to my friend Deschamps together with the second volume of Rabelais, and he fell into the Yonne and was nearly drowned. My note-book, made of bad paper, was reduced to a pulp in his pocket, and the Rabelais was almost entirely spoiled.) A note from the preceding June: *Translate the two Comedies of Terence which are still wanting* . . ., followed by these words dated the 9th of November: *Adhuc non feci*, roused me to work. "Gad, I will do it," I thought. "I shall begin to-day." And I set myself to it. . . . I had translated the Prologue and the first scene of the *Phormio*, when I heard the printing-room door open. I raised my eyes; it was Toinette, but she did not notice me. I coughed. "Oh, is it you, Monsieur Nicolas?" "Yes, my child." "Your child? I am too big." "But am I not your master?" (I had taught her to read, and was teaching her to write.) "Yes, yes; and a good master. . . . Are you going out?" "No, my child." "Oh, I would so like to go out! Could you come and write in the parlour?" "Willingly, to oblige you." For the first time since this tall and beautiful girl, who had turned the heads of the *bourgeois* (a technical term), the foreman and all the workmen, had lived in the same house with me, I had a longing to caress her. Never before had I been tempted, although every day I was alone with her; although at first sight of her I had trembled. I put my arms about her waist to draw her to me. She resisted laughing. I clasped her more tightly. Never was girl so electrically responsive as pretty Toinette. Her fine eyes clouded . . . she sighed. . . . Stirred to new life with all rejuvenated nature, I was going to. . . . "Oh, Monsieur Nicolas!" she exclaimed. "You, the only man whom I trust!" I kissed her upon the lips, and said: "No, dear scholar," and released her. I still had some remnants of honour left . . . and perhaps this was the last day of my life on which I still had them. . . . I followed her down to the parlour with my note-book, my Terence, and my dictionary, and settled myself at the secretary, while she finished getting ready. I possessed one of the oldest and most beautifully annotated Italic editions of Terence, and still regret its loss; for though now I have another Italic edition, it has no notes. . . . As Toinette passed me on her way out, she leaned over my chair a moment, saying: "Dear master, you do not know how much I owe you! If you had insisted, I should have been lost! I have no strength against you. I would not tell this to anyone else, but I tell it to you because I am certain that it is one way the more of protecting myself. . . . Remember, dear master, that you are to have a very pretty wife, who does not deserve to have another's leavings." At the conclusion of these words, spoken with her own sweet natural frankness, she went out lightly; her slim waist displayed in all its beauty by her Morvandaise costume; it was as though some nymph were leaving me, and I suffered a momentary regret for having behaved honourably. . . .

To-day, the 24th March, 1794, I have heard that Jeannette Rousseau has been dead for some years.



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(Wretched man! This was the first occasion on which I did not congratulate myself on having conquered temptation! If I had not loved work as I loved it, I should have become a blackguard!) . . . After a moment I collected my wandering thoughts and set to work. I translated that long scene, *Si quis me quæret Rufus,* and reached the last words of the third scene: *Timeo, miser, quam nunc mihi hic rem nuntiet!* I congratulated myself. "Come," I said, "the work is going quickly. It seems to me that I am acquiring some facility! *Optume!* . . ." (And this work that went so well was to be interrupted that very day, and for always!) . . .

I was beginning the fourth scene when I heard the half-door open. It was Mme Parangon! . . . My heart beat quickly. "What! Indoors in this weather?" "As you see, Madame, I am working at my *Terence.*" "Let me see. What have you done to-day?" "All this." "Yes, the ink is fresh." Colette was most tastefully dressed. . . . She looked adorable! . . . The weather was so lovely that no one would be coming in. . . . "Where is Toinette?" "She has gone out; she asked me to come and sit downstairs." "It is very kind of you to let her go for a walk, while . . ." "It was no kindness, I assure you, Madame. I had meant to work upstairs in any case." She sat down by the table at which I was writing; then jumped up again, exclaiming: "Good Heavens, that yarn! It will be ruined by the dust! For three days I have forgotten to put it away, and Toinette has been no better." And she went at once to the upper room. I devoured her with my eyes. . . . After a moment I heard her calling: "Monsieur Nicolas, will you come and hand me the yarn?" I flew upstairs. Colette was standing on a chair; I handed her the bundles of yarn one after another while she arranged them on the top shelf of the cupboard. But my ardent eyes were fixed on her slim legs; on her white drugget shoes, with high slender heels which enhanced the delicate lines of her little foot, the most beautifully formed that I have ever seen in my life. Each time she put a bundle in place, she turned her back to me and stretched out one leg behind her. Her foot touched me; and it was as the lighted match to prepared gunpowder. Every sense was disordered; so great was the tumult raging in them that I can feel it still. At one moment I was tempted to lift her from the chair, and throw her on the bed which faced us, crying: "Yield, or! . . ."; the next my bold hand had reached out to touch the hem of her skirt. . . . We came to the last bundle; she took longer over placing it than over the others. I ventured to touch her foot; I dared to kiss that part of her dress which covered certain charms. . . . I was resolved to perish or possess this woman, so long and so violently desired. . . .

My resolution was at its strongest when Colette turned to get down. . . .* She leant upon my shoulder; I turned so as to face her. One hand I placed in a position suitable to my plan, and threw my other arm about her waist. At first she was not frightened. . . .† But when my adventurous hand raised her skirt and I went towards the bed, she grew perturbed. "Put me down!" she exclaimed. "No," I answered; and a new Cacus, I felt my strength increased a hundredfold by contact with my divinity. . . . I threw her on the bed. . . . "Ah, my God! . . . Monsieur Nicolas! Monsieur Nicolas! . . . What do you want? What are you doing!" she cried breathlessly. "I must have . . . you . . . or . . . die. . . . You and I; we will die together. . . ." "Good God! . . . Ha! . . . What? . . . You would abuse. . . . Never! . . . Ah, wretch! . . . I am dying. . . ." I do not know what else she said. . . . But she called on her father and on mine. . . . I did not

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*See *Drame de la Vie*, pp. 91, 92, *sqq.*

†See *Paysan-Paysanne pervertis*, illustrations 28, 41 and 43, which are also being prepared for this volume.

hear. . . . I was . . . a hero . . . made frantic by the most violent of passions. . . . I bruised her, instead of fondling her. . . . As she fell on the bed, I had got her into a position in which defence was practically impossible, and she could not change it in spite of all her efforts, thanks to the softness of the bedding in which she was involved. . . . The very fury of my eroticism seemed to postpone the relaxing eruption of the senses, to be converted into an added potency. Thus nothing happened to precipitate that climax, whereby boldness is sometimes frustrated. She exhausted herself in fruitless struggles which, far from driving me away, only exacerbated desire and stimulated me to fresh assaults. . . . She tried entreaties. They pricked me on afresh. . . . The bleeding ruins of pudicity, already three times immolated, heated instead of slaking me. Then she thought that I meant to take her life, and my own; to destroy us both when lust was glutted. . . . Women have an intense fear of death, as a result of their excessive sensibility. So she tried to turn me; I do not know what she said, but I think I saw a smile, and that she offered to kiss me. . . . Perhaps I was mistaken. In any case I kissed her on the lips, and my whole soul went forth from me. . . . Colette sighed, and all her nerves contracted. We remained in a state of prostration. . . . Another sigh, and life returned to her. "Ah, my friend," she said, "what remorse you have laid up for us! . . ." That kiss had softened my heart; had it been given me at first, perhaps I should not have triumphed. . . . I slipped to my knees before Colette. . . .

The fury of my passion was undiminished, but it had become gentler, and I contemplated my victim with no barbarous exaltation, but in a spirit of adoration. . . . She was swooning; her face was bereft of colour, and her cold hands lay limp on either side of her. . . . I uttered a cry of anguish, and half rose to succour her. "Spare me!" she exclaimed, coming back to herself. . . . "Do not kill me!" I was no longer in the grip of frenzy, and her words froze my senses. "Ah, do you take me for a murderer?" I was still on my knees, and I kissed her hands; I drenched them with my tears. . . . She smiled (a sign that she was a little light-headed): "You are not going to kill me?" "I? I would give my life to add one day to yours!" She wept: "Ah, and it is you, you who would attack my honour!" "No, no," I answered mechanically, "the state from which you are recovering has frightened me too much!" She looked at me, as if to see whether I was speaking the truth. My respectful attitude seemed to convince her. "Let us go down," she said, forcing a smile; for she was still afraid of me. How I was punished! She tried to rise, but had not the strength. I took her in my arms to carry her. "What are you going to do? What are you going to do?" she asked in terror. "Take you downstairs." She tried to walk, but more than weakness prevented her. I carried her down with an ease that astonished her! "So strong? . . ." I laid her upon a couch; and immediately opened the door into the road, so that she saw and could be seen by people passing. Then she fell into a reverie, from which she finally emerged with a profound sigh. She looked at me, and said:

"Who would have thought that the son of a long and honoured line could have committed such an action . . . or, at least, could have wished to commit it . . . for if it had been consummated . . . I could never have survived!" "Madame! Hear me!" "Oh, you may speak! I have no strength to stop you!" Her tears flowed afresh. I was by her side. "Forgive me!" I said. "Forgive the outrage. . . . I am resolved to obtain your pardon, or to die. . . . I love you. . . . I adore you. . . . What have I not done to drive you from my mind? I gave my heart elsewhere. . . . I have sought the insipid distractions of the ballroom. . . . But nothing could . . . ever weaken that imperious affection you have inspired. . . . I adored you in silence . . . and silence increased the fire which burned me, devoured me, consumed me! . . . You speak to my heart, to my eyes, to every sense with an inconceivable vehemence. . . . I was not master of myself. . . . Say but one word! Say that you cannot forgive me, that you abhor me, and . . . I shall have lived!" "Oh, I blame myself as much as you!" she said. "Make no attempt upon your life . . . because I am as guilty as you . . . and a second crime will not efface the first. But there is a God, whom you have offended . . . and I am your accomplice. . . . Do not make my sin greater by doubling yours." She looked at me fixedly. "Wretched boy, you have turned your back on happiness! . . . Ah, do you know what I meant to do for you . . . soon . . . in a few days. . . . We must think no more of it. . . ." She shuddered, and was silent for a time; then she put her hand on mine: "Ah, have you thought . . . of what I may be exposed to?" I shuddered in my turn, without knowing why. With my foot I pushed to the baize door and, falling on my knees burst into tears: "Angel of heaven, I have polluted you! I am a monster! I should have adored you in silence. . . . I shall never forgive myself this crime. . . ." "But I forgive you! Let this horror be buried between us two; I mean it from the bottom of my heart." "O divine woman, how you add to my remorse!" "Heaven punishes me through you," she answered. "It is a terrible lesson!" "Perhaps, Madame, some good will come of it? I feel all changed. . . . Oh how I am punished! . . ." "Ah, but you will never be my brother! The punishment is heavier for me." These words seemed to burst from her, and I have always felt sure that they were involuntary. I myself felt all their force, and the blow was a heavy one!

Since Madelon's death, the expectation of wedding Mlle Fanchette had filled me with a sort of pride towards other women; but at these words I was utterly prostrated and felt an abasement of my whole being that I had never before experienced, and that I was to feel for twelve whole years. For the first time I despised myself :"Ah," I exclaimed, "I have ruined myself. I feel it." "Too late!" "Alas yes, Madame, too late." "You whom I loved so tenderly! Ungrateful! . . ." "Oh, that word is too harsh! Do not say it, Madame, I entreat you! Never say it again! . . . It rends my heart!" "He still has a heart then! . . . I did not think it existed any longer!" "I have a heart to feel that I have irrevocably offended you; that I am a monster, and that I should never look on you again! . . . I have seen you for the last time! . . ." I rose. She seized my hand, and said in, ah! what moving tones: "Where are you going?" "Where I deserve to go, far away from you!" "But I have forgiven you. . . ." "Great God!" I exclaimed, and threw myself at her feet; my words were choked by tears and sobs, but I stammered brokenly: "I have outraged . . . Divinity, in its perfect image! . . . I could not . . . I do not deserve to live. . . ." "Stay with me. . . . Your presence has become necessary to me. . . . The sight of each other will keep remorse alive. . . . You must promise. . . . My life, cruel boy . . . depends on yours. . . . Do you dare to dispose of it? . . . I shall see whether you have the heart I believed you had. . . ." I had taken her hand, and pressed my burning lips upon it as she was speaking. . . . When she had finished, I looked up at her, and ventured to say, with a seeming firmness which was far from my heart: "I will justify your confidence; I will restore to you the innocent and respectable young man you knew; I owe it to you; I will give him back. I swear it by you and by God himself. . . . You shall watch my every action; and perhaps they will prove to you that, in spite of fierce, impetuous passions, I am still that man who honoured you the most, who best knew your worth, who renders the purest, the most ardent, and the most devoted homage to you! You shall see whether I am like other men. I dedicate myself to respect. As for love, I cannot take it out of my heart; that which I feel for you is a part of the very substance of my soul. It is the inevitable effect of your nobility as much as of your beauty; I cannot take it from my heart! . . . But respect will govern love, and love will only express itself in respect. . . . All other sentiments will yield to this. That is my promise, my vow, and my oath, which I will never violate. . . . I am unworthy of your sister. . . . I shall never ask for her again. I renounce her. Even belonging to her, it would have been you and you only I adored; it was the hope of adoring you as a sister that attracted me to this marriage: you are everything to me! . . . Ah, I deceived myself when I thought I loved and desired others! . . . In those others I but saw your image, and it was that celestial image I adored. . . . I unfaithful! . . . I have thought I was, but I slandered myself! . . . I adored you before I knew you, for you are to me the prototype of beauty; yes, it was you that I adored in all that I have found lovely. My heart told me this when I saw you for the first time. 'It is herself! It is she whom you have sought! There she is. Worship her.' In happiness or unhappiness my fate is to be yours; I am and will be yours while there is breath in my body. . . . O Colette, I am not guilty; I cannot blame myself! Forgive that half of you which has done violence to the other! . . . Forgive, dear half of myself, not, as just now, through fear that I will take my life, but through affection and friendship! . . . What am I saying? You have pardoned me! You could not help it! A power stronger than yourself compelled you to forgive. In my person you forgave yourself for that assault which you yourself committed through your irresistible beauty! . . . Do you think I am talking nonsense, that I am deluding myself? . . . No, Colette, no! I am what I have said; my heart cries it aloud, and my heart has never deceived me!. . . Oh despair! She whom I adore, the half of my life, the one woman made by heaven for me, is in another's arms! . . ." As I said these words (I seem to see her still), she rose, her cheeks bright: "That she shall never be!" "And she will live?" I exclaimed. "Yes, she will live." We said no more. Our tears flowed like two fountains, our sobs choked us. After a long and anguished silence, she said: "Do not let us torture each other; let us live innocently! . . . We can do so still, perhaps. . . . Avoid any imprudence which might bring discredit upon me, or sorrow upon the honourable old age of my father and upon your upright family, and ruin upon yourself." "I swear it, Madame." "Tell me the fatal truth. . . . You know what I mean? . . . I want to know." "I will tell you." I lowered my head, and seized one of her hands. A sob made clear my answer. She sat down and wept without speaking. . . . I knelt at her feet again, and said: "Do not call Heaven's vengeance upon me by your tears! . . . Your too great suffering aggravates my crime and makes it unpardonable! . . . I call Heaven to witness that it was a power beyond myself that made me guilty. . . . I call Heaven to witness that I will atone for my crime towards you, by that limitless devotion which I have sworn! Speak, Madame; Heaven has given you a man who belongs to you as never slave belonged to his master; for he is yours in heart and will, and he will find his happiness . . . the only happiness he can know henceforth . . . in devoted service to you. . . . O woman, whom I have so much honoured, I should be a monster and should inflict punishment upon myself, if, even in the height of my crime, my respect for you had suffered the slightest diminution!

Nature drove me to this offence; Nature is my accomplice. . . . It was our common mother that put you in my arms, Colette, and gave me all your treasures. . . . Think not for a moment that I congratulate myself! No, I am filled with remorse, because you suffer! . . ." I was silent, astonished by my own words and the freedom of my language, the product of that same exaltation which had made me guilty. In action and in speech I was another man; for I had never had the ideas which I expressed; my incongruities are proof of that. I lay at Colette's feet prostrated, and wept as she wept.

It was growing late, and Colette began to fear that people would come in: "Remember my father and your parents, I entreat you," she said, making me rise. "And the respect I owe to you, Madame! As long as I live and as long as you live, your interests are mine, my fortune yours, my blood yours; I owe everything to you. For this is Nature's law: that when a man has possessed a woman against her will, he becomes her slave, as I am yours; you will see whether I rob you of your due! . . . If I dared to speak to you as I have spoken, it was only that you might know the extent of your rights in me; I had no other motive. Make full use of your absolute power, if only for pity's sake . . . to mitigate my remorse. . . ." I burst into tears as I finished speaking. . . .

"I did not think," she said as though to herself, "that after . . . he could ever regain my respect!" (Then, turning towards me with the dignity which was natural to her, but which she had not reassumed since my assault): "Your words have made me understand your feelings; I think I have seen your heart stripped of disguise, and you are not despicable. . . . What a comfort in my misfortune! . . . Let us part; some one may come in. . . ."

At the words, *"Let us part,"* I bowed and left the room without speaking, and went up again to the printing-room, a very different man from that one who had gone down to the parlour only three or four hours before! . . .

A moment later, she rang for me. I flew; I was at her side before she had had time to think what it was she wanted to say. "You left me so quickly. . . ." "I returned as quickly." "You seem . . . calm?" "Yes, thanks to my respect and devotion to you, Madame." "You comfort me!" she said, and yet her tears flowed. . . . "Ah, to have him for sole consolation who caused one's anguish!" I kissed her hand, saying: "What charm lies about your every thought and word! I feel as though you had restored my innocence! How different I am from what I was! Yes, the antidote to your all-powerful beauty lies in what you think and feel, expressed in that voice and way of yours which goes so straight to my heart. . . . O my Goddess! . . . For you are eternally my Goddess! . . . My heart will burn for you, but only as it should burn for the divine. . . ." "See if anyone is coming," she interrupted. I ran to the street door, and looked towards the Hôtel-de-Ville, and under the Clock Tower, and up the *Cour du Palais*. Catching sight of Bourgoin at the other end of the *Rue de la Fricauderie*, I returned, saying: "Monsieur Bourgoin is on the way." Colette tidied her hair a little, and went upstairs to undress.

Toinette came in, and I ran to tell Mme Parangon. "Toinette has come back: shall I send her to you?" "No," she answered, "look. . . ." (She was weeping.) "I will ring for her." "If . . . you are . . . too long in ringing . . . permit me to come and see. . . ." "Well, send her up in five or six minutes." This I did; for I was afraid lest her grief, gathering strength in solitude, might cause a swoon in which she would remain without help.

Everyone came in at last. Mme Parangon did not appear for supper;

she went to bed. The whole household was anxious about her. It was decided that she must eat something, and her husband sent it up by me. While I was still on the staircase, I heard him say: "He comes from her part of the country, and is a son of her father's friend. I have noticed that, when she is ill, she will often eat what he brings her." As a matter of fact I had already waited upon her on two occasions, which I have not mentioned because the destruction of my note-book deprived me of the dates; but perhaps it was after this that she loved me more indulgently than before. . . . I offered some broth to my dear invalid, repeating with all modesty what I had just overheard. "We must encourage that idea!" she answered. . . . I raised her, and she took the broth slowly, resting almost in my arms. I had need of that exquisite moment! Ah, what a difference between pure and innocent pleasure and the evil frenzy of crime! . . . Colette loved me: I saw it, I felt it, I could not doubt it; but I also saw that it was against her will, and I loved and respected her the more for this. . . . If I had known before, as I now knew, that she loved me, never would I have outraged her; a lover does not use violence when he is beloved; he has other resources! . . . With every moment my remorse increased, because with every moment I was more certain that she loved me, as every virtuous woman loves him who opens the way of love, which before was closed. Thus in heroic times did Briseis, Clytemnestra and Helen love the heroes who did them violence. My violence had been prompted by desire; my remorse was the result of an unspeakable tenderness, inspired by the sweet celestial goodness, the incomprehensible affection of my virtuous Colette. . . . Alas, I still had some decent instincts left! . . . Wretched man that I am! the longer I have lived, the more have I lost of my simplicity and natural goodness. . . . I was good when

I issued from the hands of Nature and the flanks of my father; I was good when I lay in my sweet mother's womb; I flowed away from my source, gathering corruption by the way as do the gutters that wash the muck and filth from the streets! . . . When Colette had finished I made her comfortable; I had done so twenty times without her minding. But now she said: "Go, please go." "Does the sight of me give you pain?" "No, no! . . . But go, I entreat you." "I am going, but I will send Toinette to you." "No! Nobody! Say that I am resting." I went away softly, but with my ears alert. When I had reached the staircase, I heard these words distinctly: "It is difficult to restrain the yearning of my heart! . . . O cruel young man! . . ."

I went down without making any noise, and said, as I entered the parlour: "She is going to sleep." "Did she take anything?" asked M. Parangon. "Yes, but she does not want anyone with her." "Good. . . . Toinette, before you go to bed, see how your mistress is." And Toinette, prompted by her own anxiety and by mine, did not fail to go quietly upstairs later on. Burning with impatience, I waited for her, hidden in the kitchen. She was back in a short time.

"Madame is asleep," she said, "but she is dreaming and talking aloud. I came down again without making any noise." "Dear Toinette, you know how concerned I am for her health: it could not be fever or delirium?" "I do not think so. She is sleeping." "Let me see for myself, only no one must know! Come with me, so that if M. Parangon wakes, you can answer." "Him wake? You would have to break the house down first." "Then I will go alone. If she is asleep, I shall be back in a moment. If she is delirious, I shall stay with her a little, and then come and tell you what should be done." Toinette promised to keep the matter secret, and I knew she could be relied on; for I was lucky enough to be as much liked by the chambermaid as by the mistress. . . . I went upstairs quietly and approached the bed. Colette was not asleep; but the late development of a new faculty had been too much for her, and she was in a state of collapse. She was speaking in delirium:

"Yes, I love you. . . . What do you want, Toinette? . . . No, do not send her to me. I want you to be the last to whom I speak to-night. . . . I want to go to sleep . . . talking . . . to you. . . . You have sinned against me. . . . Ah, how cruelly! . . . You have taught me that I was wrong to love you. . . . But . . . I forgive you. . . . There, I forgive you. . . . Ah, I love you. . . . You love me? I love you also. . . . I did not know how to protect myself, with no experience. . . . But I did not consent. . . . No, I did not consent. . . . She whom you love . . . whom you, and you alone have made a woman . . . will always be worthy to be loved, respected, honoured. . . . She will never voluntarily . . . sacrifice . . . her virtue. . . . You could not love her else. . . . My slave, you? . . . Ah, you shall be my friend . . . my sweet friend. . . . There is no comfort for me save in you . . . in you alone. . . . In you alone shall I find consolation. . . . I do not want to call you by your name. . . . No, I will never utter your name again. . . . I will not say your name. . . . For me you have no name. . . . Your name shall be locked in my heart. . . . It will always be there, dear name . . . and . . . never pass my lips again. . . . I forgive you . . . because I give you . . . this kiss. . . ." At this word I bent over her, no longer master of myself, and pressed my mouth to hers, and her lips clung ardently to mine. This gesture must have brought her partially to herself, for she stopped speaking, and turned over. . . . Satisfied that she was really going to sleep, I left her; for I feared lest Toinette should become anxious and come upstairs. "She is sleeping," I said, "but she was so restless that it took me some time to be certain that she was all right." "If she can sleep,

so much the better," said Toinette. "I could not be more anxious about her if she were my mother. She has been so good to me!" We talked a little while about her goodness. I was just going to bed, when the bell rang. I started. Toinette ran up to her mistress, and I ventured shyly to follow. Colette was wide awake, so I entered. She smiled at me, seeing that Toinette was there, saying: "Are you still up?" "Yes, Madame. Toinette came to see how you were, and found you very restless, but asleep; so I waited until she had seen you again, that I might go to bed more quiet in my mind." "Yes, I was dreaming . . . and how vividly! . . ." Her eyes were fixed on me. I understood her better than she could know, and her look went to my heart! . . . Toinette urged her to take a little conserve, with a finger of Spanish wine, and as I was equally insistent, she was forced to yield. But she could not eat more than two mouthfuls, then gave the rest to me, and I held it as a thing of price. While Toinette was tending her and preparing a bath, I took possession of the little shoes which had contributed to my madness. She sent us both away, in spite of Toinette's entreaties, for she did not wish her young attendant to see her get into her bath. I understood her reason, and led the girl away. "Go, children," she said, "I am very much touched by the way in which you love me! I have always wanted to be loved, and I am . . . so I must not complain . . . of my lot. . . . Go and rest. . . . Toinette, come here. . . ." She kissed her (for the first time perhaps) and said something in a whisper. Tender Toinette was so much affected that I was obliged to support her. I kissed the patient's hand, and she said: "Pity yourself for being a man, or I would have treated you the same." I had to drag Toinette from the room. . . . She had the fairest heart, after her mistress, and set in a lovely body; she was almost as beautiful as Colette herself.

Up in my closet, I reverently ate the remains of the preserve, bitten by Colette in two places. Then I waited to see what would happen. Toinette returned to her mistress, doubtless to wait on her after the bath; for I heard the water being thrown away. Then she went to bed. . . . Then I locked away Colette's pretty shoes in my box, after I had wrapped them up in several sheets of white and blue paper. I have always kept them, and I want them to be put into my coffin. One other foot has worn them since: the foot of Zéphire. But they were not profaned; rather they were made doubly holy, by contact with a second masterpiece!

So this terrible day comes at last to a close! The 26th of March is ended, and passes on its way down the vast river of time. . . . But it is present with me. . . . I see it still. . . . O memory! Divine power which makes man like to God Himself, how vividly you repaint it for me after forty years. (Thursday, April the 3rd, 1794, at my case.) It is with me! . . . I see Colette. . . . Colette, the soul of my life! . . .

The next day, on waking, my first thoughts were for Colette. I jumped out of bed and discovered that it was already time to get up. I was astonished to find that I had slept! I dressed, and ran downstairs. Toinette was still asleep. I woke her, but, unable to contain my anxiety, I went into the living-room, where, contrary to my expectation, I found M. Parangon already up. "What is the matter?" he asked. "I have just woken up Toinette," I answered. "I was anxious about Madame's health." "That was well done: go up and see." I tiptoed up the staircase with a beating heart, and entered, holding my breath: "Is that you, Toinette?" "It is I, Madame." "Ah!" There was a hint of fear in her voice! "I was anxious about your health," I continued, "and when I told Monsieur Parangon that I had just woken Toinette, he sent me up to you. . . ." Having thus prepared the way, I approached the bed and opened the curtains a little. Mme Parangon (as are all women with fine eyes) was perhaps more beautiful with her hair arranged for the night, than in the most elegant headdress. I trembled! She held out her hand, and I pressed it to my lips. "I am better," she said, "go and send Toinette to me." I was going out, when she continued in a voice filled with gentleness: "Listen: strive to preserve a friend for me, a virtuous friend for whom I need never blush. . . . Will you promise?" I fell on my knees, lifted my hands to Heaven and then crossed them upon my breast. "Some people might think ill of me," she continued, "because of my gentleness with you; but you have clearly understood: I am certain of that?" "Yes, oh, yes!" "Go, my friend! Call me *my friend* and leave me." "*My divine friend!*" "Say simply *Farewell, my friend!*" "*For the present, my friend!*" "Yes, for the present. . . ." "Add the words so dear to my heart?" "*For the present, my friend. . . .*" I rushed from the room. I found Toinette already dressed. "My dear Toinette, M. Parangon told me to go upstairs," I said. "She is better, but take good care of her." "Oh, I promise to do that." "My concern for her does not seem to you . . . extraordinary?" "No, no! Are you not going to be her brother-in-law?" "Who told you that?" "Oh, I just heard it. . . . But you may count on my discretion!" "I trust you, my dear Toinette." "I mentioned it yesterday, and you did not seem surprised?" "That was because I did not quite understand what you meant."

I was not really displeased that Toinette was in the secret: she was in a position to notice many things which, in the light of Mme Parangon's former intention, would appear quite natural. I resolved to tell Colette, at the same time showing her how Toinette's knowledge might be used to forestall malicious gossip. With this thought in mind I settled to work.

I was as silent and abstracted as in moments of acute suffering: if anyone spoke to me, I forced myself to answer and to smile; but I relapsed again at once. Bourgoin, who really had excellent qualities, remarked, as we were coming back from breakfast: "You are taking this very hard! Madame is going on well . . . but still, I like your feeling: she has been kind to you and a true friend!" "I should think so!" I answered with energy. "And I have never been guilty of ingratitude." "No, it is incredible how much you are liked for that! Monsieur d'Arras, for example, sings your praises everywhere! . . . I meant to tell you that we are having a new apprentice, and not a useless little idiot like Bardet, but some one you can make a friend of. He was at school with my cousin Lalande, the surgeon, who married another cousin of mine, the elder Bourgoin. His name is Loiseau; he is a cultivated man and has held two posts as tutor: he taught the young Angeliers, sons of a gentleman of Puisaye; and the sons of a President. You will get on well together. . . ." I was pleased by this news; but as I did not know the treasure that was to be given me, I awaited the event without impatience.

At midday I went down to dinner. Mme Parangon was in the parlour, wearing a mob cap garnished with a wide blue and light pink ribbon; she was pale, but I thought that I had never seen her look so appealing! . . . I bowed respectfully; and seeing that for a moment we were alone, without any chance of being overheard, I said: "*My friend* is so divinely touching that my heart opens to receive her image!" She did not answer, but made me a sign to bring forward her chair. This had been my privilege for some time; and my right had become so well established that when, one day, a guest tried to arrogate it, M. Parangon pulled him back, saying: "Each to his work!" And I placed the chair as usual. . . . Mme Parangon was never quite comfortable except when I put it in position; it was either too near or too far. But I have a straight eye; it would have made me the best shot in Europe if I had cared for sport, and has saved my life a hundred times in Paris streets, when my natural impatience made me risk the traffic; I can gauge pace and direction, and plunge between axle-trees on the point of locking with the unfailing accuracy of the man who dives through the tub at the rope-walker Nicolet's: only the cabs are dangerous to me because their pace is slow and uncertain. . . . Colette ate little. I pretended to be hungry and cheerful, but I could not swallow; my heart was so big that it filled me altogether. When the people dispersed after dinner, I returned to the parlour from the half-door, where I had taken refuge. "We will talk this evening," Colette said, "and . . . every evening, when I am not obliged to go out." As I was in full view of anyone passing, I only responded with a bow. I was as thoughtful and abstracted at work as in the morning. "Something is wrong with you," Bourgoin said laughing. "You have some private trouble, and Mme Parangon is in the secret. . . . But I will not bother you." "I am anxious about my mother's health," I answered (and this was true). "If I lose her it will be a terrible misfortune!" The foreman was silent.

At eight o'clock I went to supper. As we were sitting down Mme Parangon's elder brother arrived, and I realised that I should not have my cherished conversation. . . . Tears came to my eyes, and would have fallen had I not restrained them. Colette looked at me. I lowered my eyes, and one tear escaped. . . . I unaffectedly left the table, and went through the courtyard and out by the wetting-room door. At last I was alone with my anguish and distress. . . .

"His anguish?" some one says. I appeal to you, honest reader, who have followed me so far. Crime and virtue are no empty words: I had committed a crime, and upon a woman who was adored, respected, and beloved by my family; upon the patron and benefactress who would have given me a wife, a position and a career! She was a second mother to me. If unprincipled Parisians can regard Mme Parangon, after all that I have said, as one well pleased with my audacity, and think my pain was out of place, they are welcome to their opinion; it is worthy of them, for they have neither morals nor any sense of decency. But I still had both; I knew with certainty that Mme Parangon, though loving me, loved virtue more, and I suffered the acute and bitter pains of repentance and remorse. . . . I protest, honest Reader, that Colette's gentleness sprang from her sublime virtue (of which you will have further proof); I protest that her charm, her sweetness, and her comforting reply at midday; her love in short, of which I was as certain as any man could be, in no way diminished my anguish, my repentance or my remorse, but only increased their vehemence! . . . Far from seeking my island to extol my triumph as I had formerly proposed to do, I suffered an agonising regret for having profaned my guardian angel by an act which changed the essential nature of our relationship, and destroyed its innocence. . . . Nor was my suffering caused by regret for Mlle Fanchette: I did not love her yet, for she had never stayed in the house. Besides, I did not think of my renunciation as final (and I was right, for Mme Parangon reverted to her plan a little later): it was my crime alone, my sin against my protecting divinity, which made me cry and sob and fall into a swoon, so that I would have perished had not two men come to my help.

When I had left the presence of Mme Parangon, I plunged into the abyss of my guilt, and every comforting thought vanished into thin air.

The sight of my goddess, work, the companionship of the men and the deep sleep of exhaustion which had succeeded the most affecting revelation, had taken me out of myself: but alone in the deep darkness, my eyes were turned within and I looked upon myself with horror! . . . I walked on without knowing where I went. I followed the *Rue Saint-Simon*, and turned into the walk along the rampart outside the *Porte de Paris.* There I raised my eyes to Heaven, and each shining star seemed an eye of God: a profound terror took possession of my soul, and with my terror came the memory of my assault to serve as its foundation. At first I walked with slow steps, lost in thought, my heart constricted; then a cry burst from me, the awful explosion of my agonising thoughts: "Ah, I have committed the most frightful of sins! I can no longer say that I am not afraid of the avenging law! Law would set alight the pyre for such a crime as mine; and you saw it, just God, and have not punished! . . ." I cannot express the terror that gripped every sense! I saw the Executioner, the torture prepared. . . . The power and energy of my imagination, at all times vivid, was increased twofold. I shuddered; I fell upon my knees. . . . I could not rise. It was not men I feared: they knew nothing of my crime; but I saw the God of vengeance, the unrelenting Judge single me out with a gesture, awful and horrifying! I uttered an anguished cry and, jumping up, terror-stricken, began to run like a man pursued. I passed the *Porte d'Églény*, the *Porte du Temple*, and reached the *Porte de Champinot*: the sweat was pouring from me. "Pardon me, Great God!" I cried. "I have violated Nature's law: it is not permitted to take by force . . . from a woman . . . what she has the right to refuse. . . . Therefore I have sinned against eternal law!" As I spoke thus, crushed by the load of my guilt, I thought I felt a hand upon my neck. I shuddered. . . . My legs failed beneath me and I fell. (I was opposite the *Bénédictines de Saint-Julien.*) I fainted from pain and anguish and fear. . . . I was some time in this state before two young men, who had heard my voice, or rather my groans, while walking on the top of the rampart with their sisters, mistresses and friends, left their companions and came down on to the walk. They found a man stretched upon the ground unconscious. Their efforts brought me to my senses, and I recognised Dhall and Baras-Dallis. "What is the matter with you?" they asked. "Has anyone ill-treated you? Let us run after them and have our revenge." "No, no," I answered, "I have suffered a loss and am in deep distress." "A loss? It must be one that concerns you very nearly?" said Baras-Dallis. "Yes, yes." "Ah, a mistress then!" exclaimed Dhall. "Nicolas has too much heart to cry aloud for money lost." "You are right," answered Baras-Dallis, "but it was so long ago! Faith she was a pretty girl, and everything was settled; it was Madelon Baron." "Madelon Baron!" exclaimed Dhall.* "He is right to mourn for her! Weep, my friend: tears shed for a pretty girl who is dead do credit to the man's heart and to her virtue. You loved her truly, and she loved you: such griefs come over one again at the end of six months or a year, and one is as wretched as on the first day! . . . Ah, I know what it is! . . . Did it not happen to me with the elder Mademoiselle Douy? You knew, Dallis, that we were engaged? She was the prettiest girl in the town and in the whole neighbourhood. . . . There, I could not stop weeping for her! . . . She was going to take the place of her aunt, a midwife, at a christening,

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*Dhall was one of the handsomest boys in town, in appearance very like Laloge. He had two charming sisters; the elder, who was seventeen, was extremely reserved, and never appeared at the ballrooms; her beauty was similar in kind to that of Mlle Laloge, blonde and delicate. The other was five years younger. They each play a part in the story called *La Mairesse*, number CCXXXII of the *Contemporaines*, vol. XXXVII. The elder Mlle Dhall is the first *assistant*.

and a cursed swashbuckling butcher had a gun and wanted to show off. Mademoiselle Douy's hair was superb: 'I'll singe the bitch's pretty chignon for her!' said the brute. . . . He fired, but unfortunately there was a spike in his gun, and he blew out her brains. . . . There's a misfortune for a lover! . . . The butcher fled, but my poor mistress died. . . . If I could only have got hold of him! . . . Sometimes I am seized with rage . . . sometimes with despair, like Nicolas here. . . ." While they were talking the two young men were supporting me under the arms. . . . They wanted me to drink a little brandy, but I have always detested this spirit. I asked for a little vinegar to smell, and this revived me somewhat. They got me home, and I went indoors, pale and foredone. Mme Parangon was still with her brother; but I saw her turn white as the two young men brought me in, for they took me as far as the kitchen. I bowed in passing, and tried to smile and walk by myself; but my exhaustion was too apparent. Mme Parangon let me go, but she rang for Toinette and spoke to her about me. The girl came to receive me, and thanked my escort, which I had not thought to do. "You are ill?" she asked. "A little." "Have you had anything to eat?" "I am not hungry." "Go to bed, and I will look after you. . . . Dear Master, you were so cheerful yesterday." "Ah, Toinette, a smile often covers mourning and tears." "You frighten me!" "Just help me upstairs, dear girl; it is not proper for me to stay here." "No, no! Stay a moment, dear master, stay I entreat you! . . . Ah, you make me feel that there is something I fear more than gossip! I would buy any misfortune that threatened you with . . . my life . . . with . . . my honour, if it were necessary." I got up, and feeling that I could stand alone, asked for some wine, a thing I rarely touched. She gave me a big glassful with plenty of sugar, and I drank it neat; and then went upstairs supported by her. . . .

She helped me to bed like a kind sister and, when I was settled, went down to her mistress, to return soon with cordials which she forced me to take. She remained by my bed until sleep had closed my eyelids. . . . I shall never forget her tender cares; the order was Colette's, but the execution was for love. . . . Most excellent girl, my pretty Toinette! Your pure soul was candour itself! With the most inflammable senses, you were good! . . . You were beautiful, tall and strong, and enjoyed abounding health; you were poor, yet more than once you refused a high price for your favours. O pretty Toinette! If Colette is the honour of her province, you are the honour of Toury, and that village may well be proud of having been your birthplace! Beauty and kindness, candour and innocence, ingenuousness and modesty; probity, economy, love of work, punctuality, cleanliness, goodness and generosity – all were united in you! . . . O good and lovely girl, I set you far above any Duchess, any queen, who lacks even one of your virtues! May your honoured name stand always beside Colette's! . . .

When I woke next morning, Toinette was by my side. She made me take some soup: "You are to rest," she said. "Madame has ordered it. . . . Madame has ordered me to give an account of your health every hour, and you need not be afraid that I shall forget such a pleasant duty!" "Tell Madame Parangon that I am abashed by her kindness. . . . And thank you for yours, dear Toinette. . . ." "Do not thank me. It so grieves me to see you ill! And if you only knew how much I should love to nurse you!" My heart melts at the mere thought of the feeling with which she spoke! . . . Oh, how many good and kindly people I have found among my fellows! Dear Loiseau, most virtuous and tender of friends; Boudard and Renaud, those dear comrades so often mentioned in my books. . . . And how much goodness and kindness and virtue have not I found in you too, women whom I have adored. But I, O friend reader, I too was good and kind and sweet-natured, but am so no longer! Men have made me malevolent, rancorous and resentful as another Timon!

Feeling stronger, I got up directly Toinette had gone, and went to work. The companionship of the men with their amusing tales, which I could not but overhear, about parties on the evening before, did me more good than bed. Half an hour later I saw every head turn towards the door, and there was Toinette. She had been to my closet and, finding it empty, she was peeping in to see if I was at my place. She hardly dared face the coarsely worded admiration of the workmen by coming in; however, she ran quickly into my frame, and whispered: "So this is your thanks for all our care! There, you are a bad boy!" "I am better, dear girl; tell your mistress that I will do no more than I am fit for . . . and add that, as her kindness has brought me back to life, I shall devote it to her service. . . . Go, child; if you have all the happiness I wish you, you will be perfectly happy!" "I will go, then. But come down to breakfast. I want you to: because I do not know how to say what you told me." "I will obey, because what you say is well said." She left me satisfied. I went down almost immediately, and found a breakfast ready, suitable for the most pampered invalid. I had the honour of bowing to Madame Parangon, who smiled pleasantly when she saw me looking better, but did not speak as other people were present. Besides, I ate in the kitchen under the watchful eyes of my pretty nurse.

I saw Mme Parangon at dinner, because it was my wish to eat at table with everyone else. Her concern for me betrayed itself in her glances, and the sight of her and the sound of her voice brought tranquillity to my soul. Her brother went away directly after dinner, and I was almost cheerful during the afternoon. Did I foresee the thing which was to happen, every detail of which I shall describe?

At supper that evening she said before everyone: "I would like to go out and take the air; it seems to me mild this evening?" "Well, here we are," said her husband smiling. "Choose your escort* . . . I have an engagement, but you are more important." "No, I do not want to upset your plans." She looked at Bourgoin, who said eagerly: "Madame, my arm is at your service." "Your cousin has need of you this evening; she asked me to tell you." "Madame," said Bardet, "I would volunteer, if I were a worthy cavalier for you." "My dear Bardet, you are not sufficiently respectable. . . . And you," she said to me, "you are ill?" "No, I am not ill now, Madame." "I was going to advise you to take him," said M. Parangon. "You always enjoy a gossip about the dear home-country! Come, you can revel in it for two good hours!" How swiftly Life alternates between good and bad! This moment was one of the happiest I ever had, and at the same hour on the evening before I was fainting with anguish.

When everyone had left, Mme Parangon put on her mantle and gloves. I was standing by motionless. "Let us go out," she said. In the street I offered her my arm, remarking, as Toinette was shutting the door: "The weather is superb, Madame!" "Yes, and how bright the stars are! . . ."

*This man must not be thought wholly without good qualities: he loathed scandal above everything. One day when some ladies were dining with him: his cousins the *Godards*, of the hardware shop, *Debierne*, Manon Gauthier, Manon Bourgoin, and Mme Corhaux, etc., his guests began to talk scandal. M. Parangon grew irritated, but not liking to tell them to hold their tongues, he got up. "Where are you going?" "To get some fresh air, Mesdames: I will come back when the *cutting up* is finished." Manon Bourgoin, who understood him better than anyone, said to the others: "Come, let us be quick and pull everyone to pieces that we must, and call him back." "Oh, is that what he means? Then let's talk of something else." They called him back. "Have you finished?" "Oh, yes; we did not think you were so good a Christian." "Me? I am just a man."

"Where would you like to go, Madame?" "Where you went yesterday." "Yesterday?" "Yes." "This way, Madame." We walked in silence; and I even kept to the side of the road I had followed the previous evening. We passed through the Porte de Paris without a word uttered. When we came to the place where I had lifted my eyes to Heaven, I took her hand and pressed it. "You are moved?" I stopped: "Yesterday, here. . . . Ah! . . . I experienced a horrible emotion! . . . All these stars, I thought to myself, are God's eyes opened upon me! . . ." I went on again without saying any more, and without her answering me. At the place where I had first fallen upon my knees, I said: "Here I fell upon my knees." "Fell?" "In anguish and remorse. . . . I have sinned grievously against . . . her whom I worship and revere! . . . I have polluted the temple of virtue. . . . I have put a stain upon her life. . . . It is a crime for which I can never be comforted! . . . What madness can have possessed me? . . ." We went on walking, I holding the hand that was resting on my arm; she permitted this. "And here," I said at last, "I fell . . . in a swoon! . . . Dhall and Baras-Dallis found me, lifted me up and brought me home. . . ." "Baras-Dallis is M. Parangon's cousin," she told me. "He called a little while ago to ask after you. I was alone, and he told me all he knew; and now you have told me in a word or two what he did not know. . . . See how I trust a man who . . . How I should be blamed for imprudence if only the half were known. . . . But I am equally sure of you and of myself. . . . Yesterday evening I wanted to get you alone to remonstrate with you . . . and strongly! It would have been useless; harmful even: your own conscience has treated you more roughly than I could have done! . . . You do not yet know me, my friend," she added after a silence, "neither do you know yourself. You do not know the world. Some day you will understand me better. It will be too late for me; I pray that it may not be too late for you! . . . And when you understand me, instead of this despair, you will weep for me tenderly, and regret my loss; 'Oh, how wicked I was,' you will say, 'and how generous was she! . . .'

"I suggested this walk for your sake only. You are young; you are promising; I want to keep you safe for my native place and your revered parents. Respect yourself: never desert yourself; that is the one thing which can endanger you! . . . If you should but once come to despise yourself, because of some action which is worthy your contempt or indignation, you will be lost! Your character is difficult to govern, because your organs are weak and easily stirred, excessively so. The boat is always on the point of foundering, and I tremble lest it make shipwreck before the time! There is no crime I do not fear for you . . . even to suicide; you have no firm hold on life, and your greatest danger, the man most likely to destroy you, is yourself. Oh, fear this desperate end; for it dishonours the fairest life, and far from redeeming the foulest, is but the cowardly escape of one who cannot save himself or repent! . . . Unhappily I have acquired the right to speak to you frankly. . . ."

"Speak, lyre of Orpheus," I exclaimed. "You abate the torments of Sisyphus and Tantalus." "Young man," she said, and it was as though she prophesied, "how you will suffer in the course of your life . . . if it is long! . . . You are acquainted with virtue, you love it, you prefer it, you adore it: but you are carried away by your passions, and cannot vanquish them! Fear then, loving virtue as you do, the crushing contempt which is the due of base villainy! . . . You are weak, but upright at heart, and every time you fall endure the tortures of remorse. . . . Unhappy boy! Now it is pity that makes me weep. . . . Perhaps you will die shut away in a dungeon, tormented both by horror of death and by your own remorse! You will never be really wicked; but you may meet a wicked man's fate. . . . Not that I fear the scaffold for you. . . . Ah, you would never wait for it! Your shamed soul would fly from its body before it was forced to. . . . O God, turn aside this calamity, at the price of my own life if needs be! . . . If you escape this terrible fate, you will be scarcely less unhappy! Every day your unconquerable passions will lead you into imprudence, and suffering, anxiety and remorse will be the consequence: your life will be nothing but a circle of falls and repentances – an unceasing torture! . . . Ah, I do not ask to live if I cannot turn aside misfortune from you; I feel that I should suffer more than you!"

Sobs choked me; I threw myself at her feet: "Stop, awful Divinity!" I exclaimed. "You freeze my blood, you terrify me! This torture is more than I can bear. . . ."

She said no more; but I heard her sobbing and could see her tears. We reached the bridge. I was beside myself as we neared the mill, its seething race reverberating through the silence of the night. I tried to disengage my arm, but she held me back, her soul seeing into mine. "A monster should be drowned," I said. "Your life does not belong to you." "I give it back to God." "He has not asked for it. . . . It belongs to your parents . . . It belongs . . . to me. . . ."

Oh, what power was in those words, dear Reader! I tell you that, save for them, this day would have been the last of my days. The plan of throwing myself into the water took shape in my heated imagination, and the impulse was too strong to be resisted; I wanted to cease from being. But these words, which overjoyed me in spite of my anguish: *It belongs to me!* . . . softened my heart, and my tardy tears, which had not flowed with hers, streamed in two torrents down my cheeks. I kissed her hand. . . . "O my heart, my poor heart! Ah, Colette, you do not know . . . you will never know. . . ." "I do know," she said coolly, "and must give you one word of comfort. Knowing you, as I do now, I would rather have you to escort me than a man with a cold heart. . . . Alas, I understood you two days too late! . . . Ah, my friend, what a difference between you and the brutes I mix with daily! And . . . I confess . . . that it is to your advantage."

These were her last words before reaching the Port Saint-Nicolas. Here there were plenty of people, and acquaintances among them. Mme Parangon left me to talk to the Dlles Godard, her relatives; and, so that I should not be left alone, she introduced me to *Mlle Fleury*, a young Parisian, and her friend, little *Luce*, charging me not to leave them. . . . We went home a short time after, escorting little Fleury and pretty Luce to the house of their relatives, Mme and Mlle de Bierne, who had confided them to the care of the Dlles Godard. I was alone again with Mme Parangon for the two hundred paces or so between *Les Fontaines* and the Clock Tower.

"Do not forget our conversation," she said, "nor consider it save as a whole: the beginning is no more important than the middle, nor the middle than the end. Add to this my motive for speaking. Ah, if you only knew it as it really is!" "I will remember this evening all my life, and what I owe you," I answered. "But I conjure you to watch over me. . . . Be my guide, you whom I worship! . . ." "Worship?" "Yes, worship; that is the word." "I do not question it. . . . Why must I owe to the same person what has caused all my agony and all my . . .!" She stopped; we were nearing home and Toinette was at the door. "Has everyone come in?" asked Mme Parangon, when we were within ten paces. "No, Madame." At this I thought she was going to pause, but, on the contrary, she entered quickly. "Let us go upstairs, Toinette. . . . Good-night," she said to me, "and thank you for your escort." She went upstairs, and I stood watching her. Long after she had passed out of sight, I was still standing in the same position, and had not thought to change it when Toinette came downstairs again.

"Madame is in tears," she confided. "I do not know what is the matter; but she says that she has no grief. She sent me away lest some one should come, and no one be here." "Let us respect her secrets, dear Toinette. Such a woman does nothing without a cause; and if she will not confide in us, it is because it would do no good. . . . If you are staying here, I will go to bed. . . ." I feared that any moment I too might weep, and this would indeed have seemed strange to Toinette. So, as I went out, I played the gallant, and tried to take a kiss; she offered me her cheek, and I think this is the only time I ever embraced a pretty girl without emotion. . . . At that moment M. Parangon, who had entered the house quietly, opened the baize door: "Don't let me disturb you, Monsieur! The sly dog, look how he kisses all the girls on the quiet!" I fled, and Toinette, caught by M. Parangon, defended herself as best she could. I was very much annoyed by what had happened, yet it had one good result, it diverted suspicion. Fortunately Bourgoin, Bardet and Tourangeot entered noisily almost immediately after, and M. Parangon released Toinette; she was saved, and I went upstairs with a quiet mind. Then at last I could review all that had happened with Colette, and my heart melted in me. Alone I entered into possession of myself, and went to bed, lost in meditation on the events of the day.*

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*At the conclusion of this *Epoch*, read what I composed upon the terrible incident which I have just related; it will be found in the *Drame de la Vie*, pp. 91-208.

What do you think of Colette, Reader? . . . Ah, take care that it be not lightly, if you do not want to share in my remorse! . . . Perhaps you have already taxed her with imprudence for being alone with me a third time! But she saw more clearly than either you or I, so do not venture to judge her! . . . She understood me, and knew that she had nothing more to fear from me, unless I became utterly corrupt; and I was still far from that! . . . Observe how, while admitting that what she wanted to say to me had become useless, she yet said it, but in a somewhat different way. Note how well she knew how to give weight to her words. She roused despair; then, conscious of it by the throbbing in my veins (for she was holding my hand tightly), like an all-powerful goddess she controlled and mastered it with a word! . . . This woman was Virtue incarnate; her despair for what I had done was beyond imagination! But she disguised it; she sacrificed it to me . . . and later none will be able to doubt this. You will be compelled to say with me: "This woman was divine! . . ." Alas, alas, too soon I lost her who would have sustained me in youth! All my props gave way; I was left alone. . . . I fell. . . . Oh, I mourn over myself, most unlucky of mortals! . . . How happy I could have been if her support had stayed by me! . . . But I have lost it . . . and of all those things which are most precious to man, only the memory remains!

After so affectionate an interview, one would expect that my relations with Mme Parangon would grow more intimate. . . . Not so: the dearer I was to her the more she shunned me. She ran no risks unless to avert a greater peril. Her virtue was as real as God Himself. Directly my life was no longer in danger, she left me alone. One day, however, this wholly admirable woman said to me: "Do not work too hard. You are fond of dancing; then go and dance: you must; I ask you to; it is my wish." The last phrase was a favour from her lips (as it must always be when spoken by a woman to a man of delicate sensibilities). . . . I obeyed, and went back to my friends of the ballroom, whom I had deserted absolutely for more than a month. I began insensibly to amuse myself too much. I spent less time than ever in writing verse: I could no longer sing the praises of every Beauty, as my *Fastes*, of which Colette was the only heroine, focussed my mind on her alone. There I wrote down all that I have just related; but that was only a matter of a few days . . . of exquisite suffering. . . . I did no more translation after the loss of my Terence note-book, which happened in June; I read little, and only such poets as *La Fontaine, Chaulieu, La Suze, Grécourt, Vergier,* etc. I thought my tastes would change with all this dissipation, and the company of new friends who had already made Gaudet like themselves, a lover of wine and the pleasures of the table. I saw something of Gaudet d'Arras; his affair was settled and his vows were to be cancelled, and he was already treated as a layman although he still wore the habit; he spent his days with Manon Bourgoin, who left him nothing to desire. . . . They wanted to put me on the same footing with Mme Parangon, and used all their logic to this end: Gaudet frankly and without circumlocution, Manon with more subtlety and reserve. Gaudet d'Arras went so far as to tell this most virtuous of women (I have it from his own lips) that she ought, in conscience, to act as her sister's trustee, and supply those pleasures which would keep Fanchette's future husband in good health and habits. He painted a frightful picture of the ravages of *onanism* and *masturbation*; he pointed out the danger of my giving a child to Toinette or to some other chambermaid; or to the daughter of the dyer, or the daughter of the cobbler (Léger), or of the hairdresser (Gendot), or of the saddle-maker (Maufront), or of the cooper

(Pifou), or of the pastry-cook (Tartre), etc. Tonton Lenclos' little friend, the chambermaid, was already pregnant; but the lecherous Tonton, for her own ends (she meant to get me for herself in spite of what I knew), prevented her from naming me. Also I put myself in Gaudet d'Arras's hands, and he helped me efficiently by making himself responsible for the mother and child; and when afterwards I wanted to thank him, he said: "I was working for my own hand." And, as a matter of fact, I found out later that he kept little Marianne as his mistress, while he continued to court Manon Bourgoin with a view of marriage and with the genuine intention of wedding her. But he used this example of misconduct to frighten Mme Parangon, who spoke to me about it. I was very much ashamed of my lapse, and hid nothing from her. "I am not surprised," she said, "that, having made this acquaintance, you succumbed; but you should never have made it. Supposing that Marianne's vicious friend had not succeeded in frightening her; that Gaudet d'Arras, who is rich, had not helped you; that you were living with people like your elder brothers, anxious to make the most of your misdemeanours, where would you be now? How terrible for an honourable family to feel obliged, because of the child, to make you marry a girl without principles or fortune! . . . Ah, my friend! Without those about you, how many times already would you not have been ruined beyond hope!" I felt the truth of this strongly, and was frightened! . . . Marianne had a daughter, and I am under an eternal obligation to Gaudet d'Arras for having taken care of her, and found her, in 1772, an honest husband in a bridle-maker of Paris, *Rue Saint-Honoré*. Now, in 1784, she has a daughter of eleven (who has just been married, 1794, to a clockmaker in the same road). She resembles my daughter Marion, feature for feature, and I cannot see her without tenderness, for she recalls times which, if not happy, are at least dear to memory, by reason of the friends I then had and since have lost!

As I was saying, I thought a change was taking place in my character and that, like Gaudet, I was developing a taste for the pleasures of the table. As a matter of fact, I began to go out with the less crapulous of the journeymen printers. I visited Gonnet's mistresses with him; for besides Tonton, he had two or three others: Mlle *Julien*, a pastry-cook's daughter, whose stepmother would not let her marry him; Mlle *Trébuchet* of Fontainebleau, whom he has since married; Nannette Chapotin, a laundress of the parish of Saint-Loup, whom he beguiled with promises to win her favours; for he was a true Provençal who would have fitted in excellently with Asiatic customs. I was slightly attracted by Mlle *Duvet*, a friend of Mlle Trébuchet; then by young Agnès Morillon, then by the young Ferrands; by Mlle Douy, younger sister of the girl killed by the butcher, and by many others. Then I met sweet Colombe and became attached to her, as much for her character as for her beauty. She would have been a good match for me, but I could not think of anyone with a view to marriage: I still counted on Mlle Fanchette in spite of my renunciation, which was not held to, as we shall see later. Yet I forgot myself when I was with Colombe; she was so tall and beautiful that I felt a kind of admiration for her. Also I had many rivals, and this made me more assiduous. Without settled plan, I yet wanted to carry her off. But finally, in two meetings which I am going to describe, I was forced to make my position clear.

After having swung from the amiable Léger to the brunette Marianne Tartre, and from her to the fair Maufront; and then in succession to provocative Douy, the lively Laurent, piquant Aglaé Ferrand, etc., all my ballroom friends began to notice that I had settled on Colombe, the object of everyone's ambition, not excepting Dhall, whose appearance and talent were worthy of attention. Léger, brother of the sweet girl of that name, was the fondest, the least goodlooking, the least rich, and consequently the humblest of her adorers; Lenclos was the most ardent. Dhall hoped much from the friendship which his eldest sister had formed with Colombe at his request; Baras-Dallis put his faith in his fortune, besides which he was well-looking enough. But Léger and Lenclos, who had nothing to offer but themselves, were much the most active. When all my rivals noticed that Colombe favoured me somewhat, there was consternation among them. I noticed it too, needless to say, and was vain enough to boast about it. (O contemptible folly, how dearly I have paid for you!) But Colombe took my mind off my remorse, and charmed the period of waiting for the hand of my pretty fairy. I could not contemplate marriage with her, neither did I experience more than a peculiar liking for her. I did not desire her as I did Colette, or even Madelon; it was just a pride in being welcome to a tall, beautiful and much sought-after girl. Colombe's ideas were very different, and, if I could have seen into the future, it would certainly have been wiser to fall in with her views. As a wife she would have been another Madelon; but as I was situated and with my ignorance of the future, what could I do? I was oscillating thus between vanity and the honesty that bade me speak with friendly candour to a girl who had honoured me with her preference, when Léger accosted me one day. He addressed me in a manner so polite, affecting even, that I formed a high opinion of him. "My friend," he said, "you see something of Mademoiselle Colombe of *Joigny*, and I think she does not dislike you. It would be impertinent and foolish of me to ask you not to see her again and I do not propose to do so; but you are honest: do you want to marry her? She is an amiable and respectable girl, you could not wish to wrong her? Please tell me the truth, dear Nicolas, and I expect those lofty sentiments which I have always found in you." I could not help approving both his words and the motive that prompted them; and the propriety of his tone with me stimulated my natural generosity: "No, I am not contemplating marriage," I answered. "Ah, I have very different things to think about!" Tears came to my eyes, but I controlled them. "In that case," continued Léger, "I cannot believe that you would interfere with my courtship of Mademoiselle Colombe?" "I? Not at all! By what right?" "But will it give you pain if I try to win her? Speak, for I see you are moved." "Give me pain? Ah, dear friend, I am moved, I admit it. . . . But not because of what you have said; only it makes me remember other things!" I was thinking of Madelon.

We were in front of the Légers' gate: his sister, pretty Manon, who was standing at a ground floor window, had overheard us. She came out, and allured me with a thousand pretty ways. She was charming, and I had always found her so: and often at the ballroom she had shown a flattering preference for my company. I spent a part of that Sunday afternoon with her, while Léger took my place with Colombe. The latter asked him if he had seen me, and where I was. "He is at home with my sisters." Colombe was doubly wounded; but she concealed it. I did not go to the ballrooms that day, finding more pleasure in Manon Léger's company; for we were alone together. She was really a good girl; but she was so zealous for her brother, that I believe she would have been more than kind in order to rid him of a favoured rival. In my own province I have seen many such families, and sisters who have sacrificed themselves for the brothers who are to carry on their father's name. . . . Manon Léger, wanting to detain me and make me promise to see more of her, used all her skill in the art of pleasing. . . . My troubled senses took fire, and their ferment obscured my feelings for Mme Parangon – feelings which had become so decent and so virtuous that they might have made me worthy of her! I took liberties; Manon protected herself but without anger, as does a girl accustomed to such things, who gives by halves and only what is unessential; she did no more than reproach me gently even when I was guilty of the supreme impertinence. . . . I left the house, almost lecherous for this well-behaved girl.

In the evening I paid a little visit to Colombe. She was leaning over the half-door, the bottom of which was slightly open: "You were nowhere to be seen," she said smiling. "Why deprive those of your company and conversation who so much enjoy them, and who thought . . . that their company and conversation . . . was not displeasing to you?" "And rightly, sweet Colombe!" I answered. "But," I added, genuinely affected, "I must tell you what is in my mind, and hide nothing from you. I am going to speak to you as though you were my sister; for I love you as such more than you can possibly imagine." (In Paris a girl would not have relished this mode of address, but in the provinces, where the affection between brother and sister is sometimes more tender than that between lover and mistress, I could not have chosen one more pleasing. Colombe seemed convinced of my sincerity, and my becoming language disposed her to listen favourably. My explanation was long and, for her, painful; for I told her all about my marriage and my assured prospects; I even represented myself as already engaged to my intended, though she was as yet too young for consummation. This made a good impression: for Colombe had feared the humiliation of finding one of her young acquaintances (of whom none was her equal) preferred to her. When she saw that she had no actual rival, she offered me a sister's love in return, and vowed she would never forget me as a friend. Nevertheless, when I was leaving her, she begged me not to visit or speak to her again. I felt this so deeply that, after I had gone a little way, I returned to say: "I am yours, fair Colombe. Let us get married without delay. . . ." "I am satisfied," she answered after a moment's thought, "and, without accepting your offer . . . I will see you again; for now I know that you have a genuine affection for me and are not ungrateful, but have excellent reasons against our marriage. This comforts me; though, to tell you the truth, I can never now find happiness in marriage: I could only have found it with you. . . . Do not blame yourself! You have nothing with which to reproach yourself. This was in my mind before you had said a word; I confessed as much to the eldest Mlle Ferrand before you and I had even spoken to each other; so that your personal merit, which I have discovered since, had nothing to do with it. . . . There, your plans and those of your family are best, because they admit of your establishment as a printer, and that is the only profession which suits your character and tastes. And I am not sorry to have met you; I cannot be, and so I will talk to you at any time you do me the honour to address me. . . ." I was going to detain her, when suddenly Mme Parangon rose before my mind, and I ran away to my attic to hide my inconstancy and shame.

After what she had shown me of her heart, Colombe could no longer receive Léger's addresses. He was dismissed and could not put it to my account; for she assured him that *she would never be anything to me.*

We know how incident develops in fiction: it would seem as if novel writers were only concerned with art, never with nature. It was on a Sunday evening that I spoke openly to Colombe, and we met five or six times during the same week. On St. Peter's day, the 29th of June, she came to *la Mâris's* with Aglaé Ferrand. I took possession of her, and kept her for my two minuets. Aglaé, whom I had not invited to dance, took my bad manners in good part; as she was pretty and a good dancer, she never lacked for partners. Her partner for the minuet, Durand Fougères, kept her for the Country Dances, and I kept Colombe. Aglaé was in love with Fougères, and he with her (but hopelessly, for he was contracted to his cousin-german in Paris) and, on leaving the ballroom, she went down the *Rue du Champ* alone, but followed by her lover. Colombe and I, not wanting to disturb them, turned in the other direction; and as she was free for at least two hours, we went through the Porte de Paris, followed the Maladière footpath and found ourselves in the same spot where, the year before, I had given strawberries to Lalois and Dugravier, and afterwards been made happy by Émilie Laloge. It was the same time of year, and we began to gather strawberries. Memories of the past and the charm of the present made the place enchanting to me. Colombe stooped; she had a perfect leg. . . . Desire awoke; I repelled it. We sat down. I put my arm about my lovely friend and kissed her. Then I noticed that she was like Toinette: her fine eyes clouded, and I became more enterprising. We were at the end of a little ravine completely hidden by a hedge. Still I held back. Colombe looked at me languishing and, encouraged by this glance, I strove for victory. She hardly resisted, and I triumphed. . . . I expected great distress. . . . Not at all! And I was flattered, believing that she thought so well of me that she knew she was safe. I wronged her. "Do not think me either cunning or not too good," said this generous girl. "Madame Sautereau, with whom my parents have put me to learn the drapery business, is the friend and compatriot of Madame Parangon, and by this chance I heard about that excellent woman's plans for your future.

I am aware of your feelings for her, and of hers for you. . . . I leave you free. . . . Ah, if only I might have what others would regard as a misfortune . . . if only I might have . . . a son! My mother is kind and tender, and would save me from the usual hardships and permit me to be true to the man I love without taking him away from her who alone can make him happy! . . . No, you would never be happy with me. . . . I feel it, and that is enough. . . ." Her words went to my heart, and again I offered to give her everything. But Colombe would give nothing except her favours. . . . That day, the two close friends, Colombe and Aglaé, met the same fate at the hands of their lovers, and for the same reason. . . . We did not get home till half-past six; but fortunately no one was yet in at M. Sautereau's. This merchant's pretty young wife had been brought up in Paris; her maiden name was Bardet and she was cousin to my fellow prentice, whose father was the only poor man of the family. . . .

Yet another lapse! But one of the most excusable of which I have ever been guilty. I felt neither remorse, nor shame; and, had occasion offered, I think I should have confessed all that had happened to Mme Parangon. . . . After supper I went to have a chat with Colombe at her door. We sat down on one of the little shop benches and, reclining in my arms, she discussed her reasons for yielding to me, and told me that the elder Ferrand knew everything. . . . We were lost in each other until ten o'clock, when Mme Sautereau took us by surprise: "Ah, deceiver," she said, "would you wheedle our girls when you have a wife already?" "He has not deceived me, Madame," answered Colombe. . . . "I am deceiving myself . . . but not for long! . . ." "Go now quickly," said Mme Sautereau. "Madame Parangon has just gone in." I bowed, and was home in two bounds. Nobody had yet come in, so I stayed outside the door and meditated upon my strange day. . . . Then I went and wrote in my *Memoranda*: "*29 Jun. Columbam amicam dulce habui! . . . Dii boni! Scitis quid egimus! 1754.*"

Lenclos, who adored Colombe, managed to arrange a picnic party with her, Tonton, and myself. Tonton, being pretty, kept herself clean, and she seemed to be well thought of, especially by the men; they had their own reasons for this, and would never have allowed their wives or daughters to be in her company. But Colombe, a stranger to the town, only knew her slightly, and so accepted her invitation without even knowing that two young men were to be of the party. Léger had spread the news that I had broken with Colombe; so Lenclos, not doubting that such was the fact, hoped that I would speak for him. His sister cast a wider net; for, with all her faults, she loved her brother just as much as Manon Léger loved hers. She meant to bait her hook with favours and hoped that I would swallow it. As it was not her first experience, she was not handicapped by the fears and shy reserve of Manon Léger, but was ready to give everything; and reckoned that afterwards she would appear on such good terms with me as to extinguish the last remnant of Colombe's affection. And she partly succeeded, thanks to my weakness and the irritability of my passions.

Lenclos and I met on the road at the place agreed. The latter hurried to meet his sister and bowed to Colombe. "Oh, you must come along with us," said Tonton. "Let me see, what do you think of Sainte-Geneviève? We will have something to eat there. . . . Whom have you got with you?" "A good friend of mine." "Splendid! Go and fetch him and bring him too. . . . My dear Colombe, no one will see us, and Monsieur Nicolas is a good fellow; let us go to Sainte-Geneviève. . . . Do! Come along! I am dying to go there!" Colombe hesitated: but at last, as she was good-natured and we were friends, and because she was not perhaps annoyed at the prospect of continuing our last conversation, she allowed herself to be persuaded. Lenclos fetched me. I bowed respectfully to Colombe, and she returned my greeting distantly. Tonton took possession of my arm. Colombe was not jealous; she reflected that if we met anyone, this arrangement would make her appear less intimate with me. Tonton dragged me on ahead, saying: "Come, let us go and eat at Sainte-Geneviève. Come along!" Tonton was a charming little blonde! Although I knew all about her, I was pleased by her advances and, shall I add? the hope of an easy conquest was attractive to my growing depravity. . . . Tonton made me hurry, so we were well ahead of the others, and often, with the twistings of the winding hedge-bordered road, out of sight; then Tonton would take the initiative and kiss me in the most stimulating manner; she woke every sense to an unruly drunkenness; I forgot Colombe, I forgot the whole universe. . . . When we reached the place where we were going to eat, Tonton ordered cream cheese and white wine. The table was set and everything ready, when Colombe and Lenclos arrived. But in the interval Mlle Lenclos had given me a sample of what she wanted.

During the meal this strange girl seemed wild with joy; and she drank a great deal. I only drank a little. Colombe's behaviour was sober and decent, and she took me aside for a moment, to whisper: "Mademoiselle Lenclos is no company for me. . . . I really do not know how all this has come about! . . . And her brother worries me more than ever." "Why?" "Because I am going back to Joigny in a week." "Ah, Colombe!" "What are you sorry for?" "For myself: if you only knew how unhappy I am!" (Yet I did not know how true were my words.) "I understand a little more since our last interview: no, you are not unhappy, and I congratulate you. . . . As for Tonton and that brother of hers, who on the way here displayed feelings for me which I am in no way tempted to share, I despise them both. . . . How is it that you, who doubtless knew what they were like, are in their company? Why did you not warn me? I am your sister!" I pressed her hand. "Indeed, you are; but we have not met anyone. Let us avoid being seen, my sister. What do you suppose could happen? We are two against two in the same party; you have nothing to fear." "Then I bear no grudge against you, nor against Tonton or her brother. . . . I shall be leaving soon; I will let you know the day; then you must wait for me at the Chapel of Saint-Simon, and we will say goodbye there." "Yes, yes," I answered, "I shall not fail."

Lenclos and his sister were certain that I was speaking on his behalf, or at least about him; therefore neither of them interrupted us until this moment, when Tonton could contain herself no longer. "What is the matter? You are as depressing as nightcaps! We have come here to enjoy ourselves! Take my brother, Colombe! And I will take this lad." There was nothing for it: it would have been uncivil to leave brother and sister together. Tonton behaved like a madcap, and I was only too glad to play with her. I chased her, she fled outside the garden, behind trees and hedges. . . .

If I succumbed, I can only half reproach myself; it was Tonton who pricked me on, and with so much energy that it would have been impossible to resist her, even with a sturdier virtue than was mine. . . . It grieves me to say it, but I think that everything had been arranged beforehand between the brother and sister, in order to get me into trouble with Colombe; but they must both have been far gone in vice! Lenclos, who had stayed with Colombe, pretended to grow anxious about us, and asked her to join him in looking for us. She refused. Then he said that each had better go their own way. Colombe asked nothing better, for she bore me a grudge for leaving her in such company. Lenclos found us in a ditch below an isolated vineyard; he made straight for us, guided, I think, by a little signal from his sister, in which at the time I saw no significance. Directly he had caught sight of us, he hurried away to fetch Colombe, so that she might witness my fall. . . . This discreet and well-conducted girl pretended not to have seen anything, and turned away, although Lenclos made every effort to detain her, saying: "Look, look, Mademoiselle! Ah, I would not have believed it of Nicolas! But he is a bachelor . . . and my sister is unwed. . . . We shall see." "Look?" said Colombe to herself, "I have seen too much already,"* and she walked away, as indignant at his baseness as she was wounded by my imprudent weakness. . . . Lenclos followed her, and she forced him to call us loudly. I was not aware that my shame was known, yet I was ill at ease with Colombe. But, feeling that no consideration was due to either brother or sister, especially in view of the disordered Tonton's effrontery, she took my arm, saying: "Let us go back." "What, already," exclaimed Tonton. "I do not like this place, Mademoiselle," answered Colombe. "Monsieur Lenclos, I am walking with Monsieur Nicolas. I have something to discuss with him." Lenclos was certain that she wanted to scold me and break with me altogether, and so was not annoyed that we should be alone; he left us and returned with his sister.

Colombe watched them covertly: "The coward! He is laughing with her," she said. This remark brought me near to the truth. "What is the

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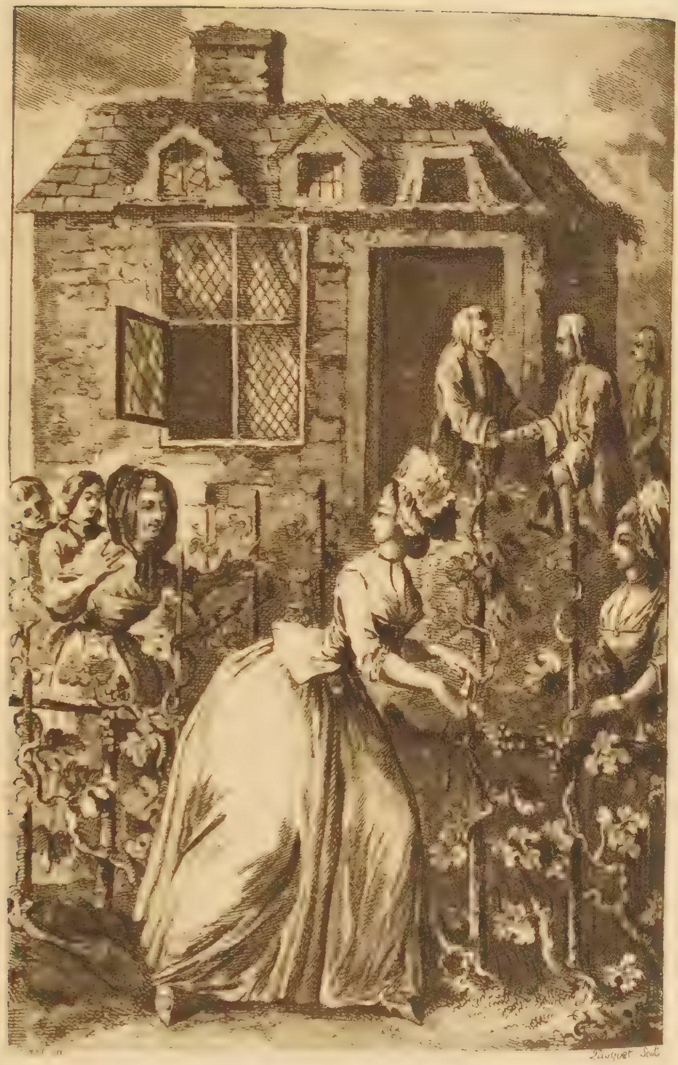
*I find this entry in my note-books on the 7th of July, 1754: *"Lencloriam puellam, quæ me prima deosculata, est vidit a me subactam Columba formosa Junctiaca puella, et indignata est!"*

harm of his laughing with her?" "You know. . . . Do not think that I am angry with you: but I despise them. . . . As for you, I can understand that a man, lured on by a pretty wanton like that, might succumb all the more readily because the other girls and women of his acquaintance are virtuous. . . . Oh, I have learned many things that I never even suspected since I came to Auxerre! The way in which the young men and . . . all the men think is so terrifying that I am flying to my mother's wing. . . . Take Lenclos: when he had found his sister . . . he came to fetch me, and guided me to the place so that I could see everything. Ah, how I despise both brother and sister, with their stupid cunning! But do not let us talk about them any more! . . . Monsieur Nicolas, I speak to you as a sister and a friend: see no more of this girl! She is not good for you even as an amusement; and he will corrupt you. I considered certain gossip as atrocious slander; I could not believe that there existed in my sex one who could so forget herself, and be her own enemy to the point of exposing herself to the contempt of men! . . . But incredible as it seems, the things I heard were true . . . and I realise it . . . with great pain. . . . Ah, let no one see me with that girl! . . . I would rather defy our conventions and return upon your arm, in spite of what people may say, than be seen alone with her. . . . But we will do neither if it can be avoided. . . . We will lose them when we get to the rampart; I shall slip down a side street, and we will separate until Saturday. I am not taking the coach; a trap will fetch me, and I shall be at the Chapel of Saint-Simon at six o'clock. Ah, you have done much to lessen my regret for your loss."

I was abashed by her words; and as, in spite of all that we have seen of my audacity, I was not yet shameless nor utterly cynical and depraved, I endured my shame, and made no effort to conceal it from her who caused it. "You are right in everything you say," I answered. "See, I am blushing, and it is with confusion and remorse." "He always expresses himself better than anyone else, even when he is in the wrong," she murmured to herself. "Monsieur Nicolas, I entreat you not to see them again; they are a discredit to you! I have a sister's concern for your honour. Guard it. . . . " My only reply was to kiss her hand, which is not a custom of the province; she was touched, for I saw tears in her eyes; she withdrew her hand, and offered me her cheek. "No," I said, "I will not kiss an honest girl on the cheek; at least, not to-day." "There he goes again, bringing back all my regret at losing him. . . . But do not see them any more!" I promised.

We arrived at the rampart, with Lenclos and his sister fifty paces behind. Colombe turned down a little street that wound through the Grand-caire, and I hurried in the other direction from the Porte de Paris, and finding myself in the *Petite rue Saint-Germain,* went in to visit the Servignés. Thus I did not see Lenclos again, nor his sister either, but the latter's motives for according me her favour freed me from any obligation of gratitude which would otherwise have been her due. My behaviour was none the less improper according to our local customs: but I obeyed Colombe. Catherine was laying the table for supper, and Edmée was reading the abridged version of the Old Testament near the window which overlooked the garden. "That's a good boy," said Catherine, "to come and take us as we are and have some supper with your old friends." "You do me too much honour," I said, "but I cannot stay to-day. I am not worthy to sit at table with Mademoiselle Catherine and Mademoiselle Edmée, and an honourable old man in whom I seem to see my own father." "Funny boy! Not worthy! . . . Very well, I make you worthy." "That cannot be. I just came in to say how-do-you-do, and to breathe



[illegible] Duguet Sculp

the pure air of your home. . . . Farewell!" and I went out. Edmée had risen and was looking at me in astonishment, because I had not said a word to her! She beckoned to me as I turned away, but I only bowed profoundly, and disappeared behind the angle of her brother's house. I paid dearly for the guilty pleasures of the day in the watches of the night! . . . Any surprise that may be felt at the shameless conduct of Tonton Lenclos will cease when we remember that she had been first seduced by a priest, the Prebendary Barbier. . . .

Mme Parangon had not seen me come in on Sunday evening, and at breakfast she asked: "What were you doing all yesterday?" I thought she knew everything, without having any idea how; I blushed and lowered my eyes. "If my question distresses you, do not answer." "No question of yours could distress me, Madame; they prove the interest you deign to take in me and which is so precious to me. . . . But they can recall things which are most painful!" She smiled: "Colombe must have been very unkind?" "No, Madame, she was sensible and reasonable, as are you; to tell the harsh . . . truth . . . when one deserves it is not cruelty." "That is true; but if I know anything, you are in great distress?" "Because, Madame, if Mlle Colombe behaved well, I in no way earned the same commendation. . . ." Doubtless she was going to question me further; but her husband woke up (we were talking near to his bed) and this silenced her. We had no wish for such a third in our conversation, and it was not resumed until after Colombe's departure. I did not see my sweet friend again in private during the following week, doubtless because Mme Sautereau prevented it.

On Saturday, the 13th of July, a fortnight after our walk among the strawberries, I got up before four o'clock and worked till five, so that my duties should not suffer through time lost. From my case I could see the

Chapel of Saint-Simon. At half-past five I left by the wetting-room door, and made for the Porte de Paris. I met no carriage on the way, and could hear nothing coming from the town. Had she left earlier? I hurried on. When I reached the Chapel, I looked towards Époigny, and saw that the trap had already passed and was descending the hill through the Chenayes wood. I began to run and Colombe stopped the trap; in a moment we were united.

"I never thought I should see you again," she said. "I was reckoning on six o'clock," I answered, "but if I had waited until then, I should have missed you." "I left earlier on purpose" (and she almost threw herself into my arms), "I feared this moment!" "Ah, Colombe, is that possible?" "I am delighted . . . that I did not succeed. . . . I know it from my pleasure in seeing you. . . ." She wept and so did I. . . . "There, that is just what I was afraid of!" she said, drying her eyes. "But now that you have seen my tears, I do not want to restrain them or my feelings either. . . . Dear Nicolas . . . I am leaving the town . . . to avoid . . . a young man whom I feel I love too well . . . and . . . who can never be my husband. . . . But . . . I repeat . . . I do not regret having known you; I will love you till death. . . . If you keep me in memory, that is all I ask. I am not ashamed of my feelings for you . . . nor of what they have made me do, although I am running away from you; on the contrary, my one happiness, my one consolation . . . will be to tell everything to my mother, and talk to her about you. . . . That is why I am going away; I cannot talk to anyone here." I was choking: it was one of the most agonising moments in my life! My suffering was so real and so acute that it lent some sweetness to my friend's. "Let us part," she said at last. "The trap is waiting and the driver will get impatient. . . . Goodbye!" "Do not let us part . . . let us be united!" "Ah, some one prevents that. . . . There, there, I know everything. I am a second Madelon: if Fanchette fails you, then Madelon's sister will take her place, for there is a daughter whom she would adopt." (I did not understand what she meant at the time; it was from Colette that I learned that she was speaking of Berdon.) "Farewell," she said, after an ardent embrace in which our two souls melted into one; and she made a sign to the driver, and forced me to get out. . . . "Farewell," I exclaimed, "oh, my dear Colombe!" "Farewell, brother," she answered. "Start at once," she added to the man, "and drive at full speed." Once more I cried: "Farewell, my sister!" And it was for ever! . . . I have never seen her again; I have never had any news of her . . . so was shattered the end of my life's springtide by a succession of terrible shocks. . . . Later, alas! weakened by misfortune and care, and crushed by poverty, I could do no more than work and vegetate instead of living. . . . But why does my heart still ache at the memory of this farewell? I can still see Colombe leaning out of the trap, handkerchief in hand, waving a last goodbye; her brimming eyes raised rather to heaven than fixed on me. . . . I stand with open arms, and watch her flying from me, escaping from me. . . . The flap is lowered, the trap goes farther and farther away; it is but a speck in the distance . . . and still I stand, without moving, in the same place. . . .

Ah, I know why! For the third time I had let happiness escape me! For my heart only so contracts with grief at the thought of six girls: *Jeannette Rousseau* of Courgis, *Marie-Jeanne* of Laloge, *Madelon Baron, Émilie Laloge, Colombe,* and *Marianne Tangis.* I say nothing of Mme *Parangon,* or Mlle *Fanchette,* or *Edmée Servigné,* or *Zéphire,* or *Rose Bourgeois,* or *Thérèse* and *Louise*: my heart's grief for Mme Parangon and Fanchette has a thousand other causes, and I should have had in any case to give my Zéphire to another. As for the other four, they have only served to make me feel the full extent of my misery!

On saying farewell to Colombe, that is, at the moment when the trap had absolutely disappeared from sight and I was thrown back upon myself, I felt that aching void which has always followed on the loss of women to whom I am attached even more by feelings of respect than by love. But at that time I had a strong comforter! For long now I have had none! I returned quickly in deep pre-occupation. It is hard to express my state of mind and heart save by saying that it had a sorrowful charm.

Next day was the 14th of July, and my emotion of the day before made the commemoration of my first arrival in the town the more affecting. Reader, if you have never felt that flood of emotion produced by anniversaries, you must bear with me; this is the last of its kind I shall describe. . . . I spent the remainder of the day at the ballroom, not to amuse myself, but to see Colombe's friends, who, since I had known them before her, had brought us together. I found the ones whom I wanted to see, the three Demoiselles Ferrand, Colombe's best and sincerest friends. Aglaé (the eldest) remarked that she was astonished that I should praise Colombe, and so much regret her departure, *considering that she was sure, quite sure, that it had only depended on me whether she stayed or went.* I stared at Ferrand, dumbfounded by her words. "She told me so herself," she added. I still looked at her without answering; the emotions she re-awakened in my heart were too intense for speech. I went apart and then, feeling myself on the verge of tears, escaped into Mme Maris's little garden, which I only just reached before the tears came. Aglaé and Aimée, her second sister, followed me, intentionally or by chance, into the garden, and the former, seeing my tears though I strove to hide them, threw up her eyes to heaven, and said to her sister with an abrupt gesture: "Colombe has been betrayed! . . . Ah, the wretch who did it deserves . . .", and they went indoors, pretending not to have seen me. But when I returned to the ballroom, the three sisters and their aunt were very friendly to me. Aglaé said she was writing to Colombe; but she never told me what was in her letter, and I never heard Colombe's answer. I can only presume, from certain vague phrases dropped by the three sisters, that her parents married her in a hurry, almost immediately after her return home. And this conjecture was fortified about a year later, when, with Marianne Tangis and the Dlles Lacour, I happened to pass in front of the Dlles Ferrand, and heard Madelon remark to her eldest sister (Aglaé): "He is doing well! In Colombe's place I should have waited." "Oh, she had no choice . . ." and she said something in a whisper. "He is not unhappy!" said Aimée. "He always falls on his feet!" Marianne and I had stopped to listen, but the Dlles Lacour dragged us on. . . . I left the ballroom early. But from the day after Colombe's departure, the three sisters were very dear to me, and la Maris's ballroom seemed empty when they did not adorn it.

When I got home I found Mme Parangon alone. It was more than three months since we had had a private conversation of any length. Our manner towards each other was serious. She was habitually sad, but with no touch of ill humour. "Where have you come from, my friend?" I described my day to her, not forgetting what concerned Colombe, because of the sacrifice I had made in that matter. As she seemed to enjoy listening to me, I described our farewells of the day before. My narrative roused her from her depression; colour flooded her cheeks, and tears came to her eyes. But judge of my astonishment when I heard her say: "Ah, what have you done! Again you have let happiness escape! After Madelon, she was the best wife for you. . . . I know that sweet girl. . . . You will never find her equal. . . . Not even in the one. . . . Why did you not tell me about it?" I was so surprised, so dumbfounded, that I did not know what to answer. "No, no," I exclaimed at last. "She would not have made me happy! . . . Fanchette, you, or death!" "Yes, yes," she said, deeply moved, "she would have made you happy. O my friend," she added, "everything slips from your grasp! I shudder for your future!" "But I still have you?" "Yes, you still have me, and while I am alive, you will never say: *There was a time when Colette cared for my welfare,* for that time will always be; it is neither in your power nor in mine to make it cease. . . . I gave you my sister out of friendship, I might almost say, out of generosity. . . . Now I owe her to you." "Kind God," I exclaimed, "make me worthy of these sentiments!"

Thus passed my third commemoration of a day which, save for years of utter degradation and dissipation, I have celebrated throughout my life with tender tears. My state of mind on this 14th of July is expressed in a poem wherein I bewail my lot (see *Drame de la Vie*, p. 1220): first I mention Colombe, then Colette; and after, those other persons whom I most esteemed. [It must be remembered that the work just cited, although very feeble and at times foolish, is the complement of this one. In it and in my Calendar it is possible to follow the remote consequences of my adventures with Colombe, Madelon, Émilie, and others who came after.]

On the 15th of July, Louis-Timothe Loiseau arrived as an apprentice, brought by his friend Lalande, surgeon and husband of Manon Bourgoin's elder sister. He was about twenty-six, that is, about six years older than myself. . . . All my life I shall bless the happy day which gave me a friend to serve as counterpoise to Gaudet d'Arras, Gaudet, and to all those others who encouraged me in debauchery, either with lying philosophy or through the allurement of a gross indulgence. . . . Oh, Loiseau! Dear friend! You lived with me for four and a half years! It was long enough to let me know you; it was long enough to make me regret your loss for ever! But it was not long enough! From what lapses you would have preserved me! How you would have comforted me in my troubles, if you had not averted them altogether! But why complain? Did he not help me to endure my two most cruel losses? . . . Ah, no one could help me to endure his! The wound bleeds after the lapse of twenty-five years (May 1784), of thirty-five years (May the 4th, 1794, setting up), and will bleed to my last breath.

It was midday, and I was sad. I went down to dinner to see Mme Parangon, my friend and comforter. . . . Great God, how strong is virtue! She whom I had outraged and inhumanly insulted remained a friend and comforter after my offence. . . . She was an angel . . . but alas, she was mortal. . . . O angel of Heaven, I prostrate myself in the dust to adore you – dead. . . . I adored you living, before and after I had outraged you: but above all after. . . . O Colette, from your proper home in God's bosom, look down upon your unhappy friend who, at nearly sixty years of age, is still dragging out his sorrowful days. . . . And give him of your Virtue. . . . He is suffering; for ten years wicked men have crushed and slandered him; they poison his life, and make him like the shuddering criminal who, oppressed with his guilt, sees the spy sent to arrest him in every face that looks at him! . . . Ah, they are chastising me for my crime to you. . . . They know nothing of it; it is I who reveal it. Punish me, barbarians; it is only just. . . . She comes to me, this adored woman. She smiles at me with more of tenderness than joy. She stands before me. . . . Stop, stop, poor wretch, and tell your tale! Check these illusions dear to your uplifted fancy. . . . Ah, these asides, these outbursts, these interpellations, are not for artistic effect. They vomit from the heart.

As I was saying, I went down to dinner, eager to see Madame Parangon, and she smiled at me with more tenderness than joy. Behind her, in the parlour, I noticed a tall man, bronzed as a hunter; and at his side a fair, handsome man, rather sunburnt, with a frank, kind, laughing face, exceedingly agreeable to the eye. I liked the look of him. "Here is some one who will be a companion for you from every point of view, Monsieur Nicolas," said Mme Parangon. "Monsieur?" "Yes, Monsieur," replied Loiseau. "I congratulate myself, Monsieur." "And I, even more so, Monsieur," replied Loiseau, "for you already know what I want to learn; it is for me to make myself agreeable to you." He said this with so much friendliness (and it would have been even more striking to-day, with *Citoyen* for *Monsieur* and *thouing* for *youing*) that I liked him on the spot. But do not imagine, Reader, that our friendship was so quickly formed! "Monsieur Nicolas will do everything that rests in his power," said Mme Parangon to M. Lalande. "Everyone has his little faults; but Monsieur Nicolas has excellent qualities which make one indulgent towards his." At these words Loiseau took my hand. "If you had been perfect I should have been afraid of you. Will you be my friend, if I deserve it?" "Unconditionally, Monsieur," I answered. He clapped his hands: "Madame," he said to Colette, "what you said just now is the most pleasant thing I could have heard about a young man, from a woman such as you; for it expresses a cautious and enlightened friendliness, and the way in which Monsieur Nicolas answered me just now confirms the excellent opinion you have given me of him." I had gone a little apart, and having put Mme Parangon's chair in place for her, was tidying some books. Lalande said to Loiseau, lowering his voice somewhat: "Still, he looks a bit artful, and seems serious and preoccupied?" "I noticed that," answered Loiseau, "but he has a frank laugh; I would go bail for him." I did not lose a syllable of their colloquy; and Mme Parangon said, smiling: "Don't trust him, he can hear you!" When I returned to them, my manner was less reserved. "Did you not hear what they were whispering?" asked Colette. "Yes, Madame." Lalande reddened. "At least there's no subterfuge about him, not like our hare the other day," he said. "I have never yet caught him in a lie," answered Colette, just as I was hurrying into the shop to serve a customer. She followed me as several books were wanted. While I was on the top of the ladder, I heard Lalande say to Loiseau in a very low voice: "That lad stands well with the mistress of the house!" "I believe so; but he looks as if he deserved it, and both seem thoroughly good people, according to their temperaments." "Oh, Madame Parangon is goodness incarnate," answered the hunter. "That's an established fact." "I can see that by her glances, so sweet and modest yet full of a certain dignity. But all this gives me the highest opinion of my new comrade. It would be a real boon to have some one here who is my equal in education and shares my taste for virtue." I listened as much as I could, but at last I was obliged to attend to business, and so lost the rest of the conversation; only catching these words, while Madame Parangon was taking the money for the books: "*They say*" (or something like that), "that she wants to make him her brother-in-law. . . ." "Ah, that removes any doubt as to what I was telling you."

Such more or less was what passed at our first meeting. M. Parangon came down from his office; the foreman appeared, and Loiseau was introduced to them. Then Mme and Mlle Bourgoin arrived, and we sat down to table. Loiseau shone by the breadth of his knowledge; his philosophy and his acquaintance with physics astounded me, and made me realise my own taste for these two foods of the human mind; for sound physics has always been a science that I have ardently and constantly pursued. He expressed himself well, concisely, gracefully and with facility. He had visited the capital; then he had educated the children of a magistrate at Dijon; and afterwards those of a gentleman of Puisaye. He had that social polish which I lacked, and from which the manners of Auxerre were somewhat more remote than those of my own village; yet it was just this polished ease that I did not like, although at first I had admired it, and which kept me aloof from him for some time: *similis simili gaudet.* We were not yet sufficiently on a level, and I was more at ease with my uncouth Gaudet, whom I excelled in everything; as I did all my other friends, with the exception of such people as Deschamps, Borne and Housset.

On leaving the table Loiseau came with me to the printing-room. . . . I explained everything, and shortened for him what no one had made shorter for me. Bourgoin, the foreman, extolled my knowledge and my character (I was less ignorant than Bourgoin, just as Loiseau was better read than myself). On account of his age, Loiseau was set to compose the first day; Bourgoin gave Bardet to understand that, in view of his youth, the ordinary rule would be in abeyance in his case. But Bardet was himself so enthusiastic for Loiseau that, calling us together in the absence of the workmen, he said: "I willingly agree to regard the two of you as equally my seniors. Apart from M. Loiseau's age, he has a brain; and I only wish Monsieur Nicolas was my junior, and then he would see how I would make myself more junior still out of affection for him." "I am delighted to find myself among such pleasant people," said Loiseau. "You make me love and value my profession." But this understanding was only between the four of us: the foreman, Bardet, Loiseau and myself; when the workmen heard about it and saw that the newcomer was a tall well-dressed lad, their superior from every point of view, they set about humiliating him. At first Loiseau was surprised and even disgusted; but when Tourangeot had described all the duties that usually fell to the lot of a new apprentice, he put up with everything like a wise man: he would not let Bardet execute even the vilest, the most (one might fairly say) immoral commissions . . . but undertook them himself, and discharged them with a discretion which was by no means pleasing to the men, though they dared not complain. However, he was soon relieved of all such duties. M. Parangon objected to his fetching the luncheons in a basket; I still reserved to myself the duty of sweeping the printing-room under and round the cases, as I had done from the beginning, sorting the type on the spot, and allowing no accumulation of rubbish; Tourangeot, now apprentice pressman, attended to the adjustment of the presses, according to the rule; and so it happened that Loiseau had nothing of this sort to do until winter, when he insisted on sawing the wood for the stove, though Mme Parangon told him that, long before his arrival, she had allotted this task to Jean Lelong, her servant. These trivial details must be pardoned: they give a picture of our usages and customs. . . .

The foreman and Loiseau became allies as was but fitting, for Bourgoin was connected with Loiseau's most intimate friend, Lalande; also, though rather dull, he was a good fellow and an honest, and knew his business thoroughly. They always arranged their Sunday excursion together. As for me, since Colombe had gone away and the sisters of her other wooers had broken with me, I joined no parties; that is, unless I could find a companion with whom I was not too well acquainted. No one ever saw me on Sunday; in the printing-room I was silent, taciturn and industrious;

my voice was rarely heard. Loiseau thought me a bear by nature, or, as he put it, a "bit of a wolf." He held himself somewhat aloof from me, and his politeness with me was even *more polite* (if I may be allowed the expression) than with any of the workmen. This wounded me, but I was too proud to show it; only I began to feel a little bitter towards him. He often discussed Physics, especially in the evening when we were *distributing*, that is to say, returning the type from *forme* to *case*. I was almost the only one who could follow him (for Degout was often absent), and it was to me that he looked when talking. I thought his tone too dogmatic, and on one occasion made fun of his argument (which I described as his physical *causes*), as though it was a personal insult. But there was no need for him to make me ashamed of myself, although the jeering crowd was on my side; I blushed for my fatuous vanity, when I reflected that I had behaved exactly like those ignorant dolts whose attitude had filled me with the profoundest contempt. I was never again betrayed into this excessive stupidity. Loiseau was observing me more closely than I suspected. He understood what was passing in my mind, and my shamed confusion on this occasion did not escape him. He augured well from it: and braced himself against my opposition and the difficulties my character presented; he meant to like me in spite of myself, and to make me worthy to be his friend before I grew to like him in return. My dear Loiseau worked a year and a half, and with success, though often the signs of this were hidden even from himself. Even when I left on the 1st of September, 1755, our friendship was still not firmly established on my side.

So much for what concerns my first acquaintance with Loiseau; I will add a brief remark on my state of mind just before his arrival. Something of superstition was observable in my remorse; yet the analysis of my Poem on the Nature of Things (quoted above) shows me free of all such prejudice. Note that this poem was not finished until 1755, more than six months after Loiseau had arrived. He cast light on certain points on which I was in doubt, and, emboldened by these additions to my knowledge, I ventured to talk to Gaudet d'Arras, who was enchanted to expound his theories. These were very advanced for that time; he was my Epicurus and my Spinoza. Loiseau saw my poem directly it was finished, and was beyond measure astonished: he had not believed me capable of either conceiving or expressing the ideas contained in it. It was on this occasion that he looked thoughtfully at me, saying: "I very much fear that a certain woman of distinguished merit is right, and that you are a strange, amazing being! . . ." But let us take up the thread of every-day events again.

Mme Parangon seemed less sad now that I had a companion who would be a good influence in my life; she seemed to rely entirely on him to keep me straight, and scarcely ever spoke to me, save in the evening when he was there too. But her health was not good. More than once when I was reading proofs in the parlour with her husband, I watched her covertly, and saw that, while pretending to read, her tear-filled eyes were fixed on me. . . . But why? You will soon know, Reader, and from her own mouth.

On Sunday, the 21st of July, I hurried eagerly to Maris's ballroom, hoping to find the Dlles Ferrand. They were there with their aunt when I arrived, and so deep in conversation that Aimée had left her partner for the minuet all alone in the middle of the room. "Come, come, Mademoiselle," said Mme Maris, with the magisterial gravity she affected on these occasions, "your cavalier awaits you. . . ." (And then between her teeth) "But here comes the god of all the ladies: they wont look at anyone but him, and start chattering directly he appears." "Play, Madame Maris," Aimée said, blushing. The dancing mistress scraped out the tune; and I took up my position near to the Ferrands, hoping to overhear something. During a country dance in which her aunt and two sisters were taking part, I questioned Madelon, but the moment I mentioned Colombe, she grew serious and would not say another word. Afterwards I danced with Aglaé and then with Aimée. Finally we all sat down together, with myself in the middle. I asked something about Colombe; no answer. I imagined that the girl had written to them, and asked them to say nothing about her to me, giving reasons which seemed adequate to them. What were they? Curiosity made me adroit, and I made a discovery. I escorted the Dlles Ferrand home, and took leave of them; but instead of going away immediately as was my custom, I paused for a moment, and Madelon said loud enough for me to hear: "What would it have mattered if he had been told? Some one is always being ill." "Hold your tongue," said her aunt. And then to Aglaé, "Fine goings on! Nice things happened on St. Peter's day! Two friends . . . I don't understand that kind of generosity! . . . She's been caught. . . . Look out for yourself!" I could hear nothing more, but my anxiety can be imagined. I turned away, as depressed as before I had been exhilarated by the hope of having full news of Colombe; for Mme Parangon's remarks had made her very dear to me. I went for a stroll upon the Ile d'Amour. It was half-past five. I sat down under the poplars to read; but the voices of young girls from just beyond the mill race made me raise my eyes, and walking along the river path, not far from Gremmery's tannery, I saw Marianne Tangis, her sister *Julienne* and cousin *Dorothée;* with *Jeannette Demailly*, Rose Lambelin, Annette Bourdeaux, pretty Adelaïde Nombret, Mamertine Herissé, and Manette Hérisson, the butcher's fair daughter. They saw me too. and those acquainted with me responded to my bow. Then they began chattering together. But when they had reached the tannery, the poplars hid them from my view, and I thought no more about them. I was reading Mme de Villedieu's novel *Don Carlos*; the story gripped me, and I was deeply absorbed in it when my attention was again distracted by a swarm of girls upon the crest of the island. What a pleasant surprise! They were among the prettiest and most elegant young ladies in the town; but I did not know them personally; I had only seen them, or was to see them, three or four times: Mlle Hollier and her pretty maid Goton; the Mlles Bourdillat, *Doris* and *Dirce*, who were later to become her sisters-in-law, with their maids; the Mlles *Pouillot* and Mlle Carouge; the tall and handsome *Girard*; and Mlles *Debierne, Paintendre* and *Hélène Luidivine*. They sat down just above me; I made no movement. "There's some one very much absorbed in his book," said Mlle Hollier. "He is a fellow-countryman and pupil of Mme Parangon," said Mlle Debierne, a beautiful brunette. I heard and, taking from my pocket the beginning of my song to Philis Hollier in the *Séjour des Grâces,* laid it open by my side, and near to it my Praise of Mlle Carouge. Dirce crept forward and, taking the verses in her pretty hand, showed them to the others. "That is myself!" whispered the fair Hollier. "It really is!" answered Doris. "Oh, he is a poet," murmured Mlle Paintendre. "I have some of his work." "And look, here am I too!" exclaimed the ingenuous Carouge. I said not a word. "He is that printer's apprentice who is received by ladies, because he is so handsome and has such exquisite taste and is so clever about the fashions that suit them," said Jeanne Girard. "I have a wholesome respect for our men, but not because of their virtue – after talking to Madame Linard," said pretty Dirce. "This lad is well-behaved and able," answered Mlle Debierne. "My cousin Parangon will tell you so, and she knows him." Doris remarked that Gaudet d'Arras thought very highly of me, and Hélène Luidivine, another young artist in feminine attire, said that M. Clément, canon and brother of the parliamentary councillor, was an intimate friend of my Courgis brother. . . . Still I made no sign. The fair ladies rose to depart on seeing a company of younger girls approach, taking my two poems away with them.

The new arrivals were the same girls whom I had already seen on the other side of the mill race. They had turned back silently upon their steps; and, engrossed as I was with those sitting just above my head, I had not noticed them. . . . I rose, shutting my book, and bowed. Annette Bourdeaux pushed Marianne Tangis towards me, and the bank was so steep that she could not stop herself, and would have fallen into the mill race had I not caught her in my arms and brought her down sitting. Her companions shouted with laughter; all except Rose Lambelin, cousin of *Deschamps* of the *Italiens*, a tall well-made brunette, imperious in manner and glance, and in the set of her eyes beneath harsh, black eyebrows, and in the deep tones of her voice. She was seventeen, and looked twenty-five. She scolded her pretty neighbour Annette severely. . . . Marianne Tangis was gentleness personified; though she was pale with fright, the sweetness of her expression was unchanged as she lay in my arms. "It's all very well," she said to her young friend, "but I should have been in the river now save for Monsieur Nicolas." I helped her up, and when we were almost at the top of the bank, Rose held out her hand and took possession of her. I found this Rose dignified and sensible, with reason in everything she said. She made an impression of a kind on me; there was something provocative about the contrast between her white skin and her sombre manner, eyes, hair and brows; and her perfect figure, and dignified and easy carriage, almost stood her in stead of beauty. . . . Marianne Tangis, on the other hand, had a pretty face, and was gentle and appealing in manner; she was small but well made, and her voice caressed the ear and went to the heart. She was just as touching as Rose was striking. Jeannette Demailly, Canon Demailly's niece, was beautiful in the same way as Émilie Laloge; as daintily made, as fair and tall and pretty, but with less colour and even more childlike in manner. Julienne Tangis was not pretty, but she was a nice girl, and Dorothée Tangis, her cousin and Canon Colombet's niece, was plain, but well built and with a very pleasant smile; we shall hear of her again in connection with Rose. Mamertine, a pretty brunette, was the daughter of that blonde, pink-and-white mercer with the pretty smile near Saint-Mamert, to whom, it will be remembered, I wrote some verses on the 15th of August, 1753. Manette Hérisson was the beautiful daughter of a very rich butcher; her brilliant complexion made her dazzling; among her companions she looked like a superb blossom in the midst of a basket of lesser flowers. Adelaïde Nombret had a pretty little doll-like face, and Annette had the grave beauty bestowed by noble features.

I took a turn on the island with these girls. They wanted to look at my books, and were longing to read them; but I would not gratify them in this. They left me at the little footbridge by the mill, saying that they were going back to the town, which meant that I might not accompany them. So I returned to my book and, so as not to be interrupted again, went right to the edge of the eastern bank, and hid myself among the low-growing willows and wild cotton bushes.

I was completely engrossed again, when, at half-past seven, I heard more voices above me. Sure of not being seen, I listened. The speakers were Berdon Baron, Manon her sister, Thérèse Bezanger and her sister Agnès;

along with their cousins, Maîne Blonde, Claudon Roullot and Marianne, the latter's young sister. They were talking about me, and reading some of my verses to *Madelon*, either written to her personally, or addressed to other girls; for it will be remembered that I gave her a copy of practically everything I wrote. They seemed very much absorbed in what they were reading.

Claudon said to the others: "He loved her very much! I would like to be loved like that!" "And I too," said Maîne. "But it's all languors and adoration," exclaimed Thérèse. "Do you prefer a man shameless and licentious, sister?" asked Agnès. "I would like him to love me as he loved my sister!" said Manon Baron. "But that is impossible: they say one only loves once like that." "Well, I have always liked that lad," said young Marianne Roullot, "I see him every day at the Dlles Cuisins, my aunts, and he is civil and well-behaved. He is not brazen-faced like your brother, Maîne. Do you remember that time last Winter when we played forfeits in the parlour, with my sister Chardon, Maîne, Yon's sister, the elder Bourdignon, Berdon and Manon, young Fanchette Collet and Madame Minon the attorney's wife?" "Oh, yes, I remember," said Manon. "He held the forfeits and he covered them with his hat; it was Œillette Bourdignon's turn to take one, and when she asked for it, he told her to come and get it. She didn't like doing it; however, she put out her hand and took . . . and took . . . and took. . . . Oh, I cannot say it." "They are all like that," said Maîne. "If you do not keep a sharp look-out when they are near you, you will find a couple of hands in your pockets, one on one side and one on the other." "And once when there were not enough seats," said Thérèse, "Monsieur Seurrat took me on his knees. We were talking and laughing together. . . . I felt, I don't know what . . . somehow or other Monsieur had got rid of my clothes and his own too!" "If they once touch you with the tip of their finger," answered

Maîne, "they will say that they have handled your whole body." Only Berdon was silent. It was she who was reading, and I thought there was something mocking in her manner. "I do so wish," said Manon, after Berdon had finished reading, "that he would tell us the air of that long song, the one in which he calls my sister Jeannette Rousseau. . . ." "Here's a fine thing, magnificent," said Berdon ironically, "and about me, I believe." [It was my little poem on the evening flea-hunt.] She read the whole of it. Her young friends, not much of critics, were delighted with it; but Berdon smiled disdainfully. "My cousin Deschamps read it, and he said. . . ." "What did he say?" asked Maîne Blonde eagerly. "That it was bad." "The versification, sister!" exclaimed Manon. "But he also said that, with a few corrections, he would rarely have read anything that gave him more pleasure." "Possibly, sister; but, after all, it is in verse, and as such is not good; if the verse were good, the whole thing would be good: the difference is between nothing and everything; a mere trifle." "She is quite right," I thought, "and her criticism is intelligent, but it does not make her amiable; I suppose because it is second-hand, and that kind of criticism is always intolerant."* Berdon had come to the song:

You know, O fair Timander,

written for her sister on the 20th of January, 1753. The occasion of these verses made them sacred to me, and I never re-read them save with reverence. Berdon began to sing them, and her tone displeased me: "Stop, profane girl!" I exclaimed in a loud voice. The girls shrieked and fled; and Berdon was by no means the hindermost. They were all really frightened,

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*So, nowadays, "fastidious" readers take their cue from journalists, and condemn without understanding, and therefore unfairly. They look at the words, and say: "This is bad . . ." when reading a passage of which Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau might have been proud . . . O . . . *servum pecus!* 1794.

for it was late. They fled from the island and on to the opposite bank. I took good care not to let myself be seen, but I could see them. At last they went away. At once I left my hiding place and, going by other streets, my quick feet easily outstripped them; and when they reached the quarter, they saw me sitting quietly in front of our door, engrossed in a book. I pretended not even to see them go by. They sat down on the benches by the house-doors or on the steps of the clock tower and chattered together; I never once looked up. When the light failed (as it soon did), I went indoors to put away my book, and then came back to my bench. They had taken possession of it. Manon, who was nearest to me, asked me to give her the air for the long cantilena. I pretended not to know what she was talking about. She spoke of my verses. I looked blank. Yet what she had said attracted me to her, and in a low voice, I showed that I valued, respected and liked her. The memory of her sister came vividly before me, and brought me to a softer mood (which was scarcely surprising). Manon saw the tears in my eyes, and asked: "What is the matter?" "Do you think a single day passes without my weeping for her?" She turned with brimming eyes to Berdon, "Ah, sister, you were very unjust!" Berdon was intrigued by these words, but made no answer. Later Manon made me promise to get Madame Parangon to lend her books, as she had to . . . (she avoided saying her sister's name). I agreed before the words were out of her mouth, and she was very pleased with me.

Treisignies, the journeyman printer, had slept two nights in M. Parangon's upstairs room, and had told me that everything the three Baron sisters said after they had come up to bed was clearly audible from it. I went out after supper, but not for long. I came back after everyone had dispersed for the evening walk, or for the card parties which had become the fashion since we had had a Freemasons' Lodge. No one outside saw me return. I said to Toinette: "I want to write in peace; in the printing-room my light can be seen from the Cordeliers and I do not want Gaudet d'Arras to know where I am, so I shall go upstairs and shut the door; and if anyone comes, please ring for me before opening it." I went upstairs and waited patiently, reading my Latin Terence, for the sisters to return from their walk, which they did at half-past nine; for ten o'clock was still considered an unseasonable hour for young girls to be out. I heard them enter their room none too quietly. There were four of them: the two Baron sisters and their two cousins Bezanger. Berdon and Manon had been wrangling on the stairs. "You want everyone!" Manon was saying. "You sulked with my cousin Deschamps just because he paid some attention to me!" "I didn't sulk," answered Berdon, "I only told him that he would find he had a rival." "Who?" "Some one you know quite well." "Oh, I would like to have *him*!" "You can have him, for me." "That's only because he has never courted you, and you were sure he would. . . . But your charming temper drove him away." "Mine? . . . But you are right: my pride was wounded and that made me scornful." "Ah," said Thérèse Bezanger, "a girl like Berdon is not for a printer's apprentice." "One has to be apprentice before one is master," answered Manon. "Wait till he is, then," said Berdon. "Oh, Lord! Do let's talk about something else," said young Agnès. . . . "Who could it have been listening to us on the Ile d'Amour? It makes me quite uncomfortable!" "You noticed that cousin Deschamps was rather half-hearted in his denial," said her sister. "Well and good if it was he," answered Agnès. "But suppose it was Monsieur Nicolas?" said Manon. "That girl sees her Monsieur Nicolas everywhere!" exclaimed Berdon. "Didn't we find him in front of the door, when we came back, quiet and bookish, and down at the mouth as usual?" "Down at the mouth!" exclaimed Manon. . . . "Oh yes, you are right there. . . He has been sad ever since my sister's death!" "You are making me depressed!" exclaimed Thérèse. "One must always either quarrel or cry with you." "One might well regret such a good sister," said Agnès. "Yes – on behalf of strangers. . . ." answered Berdon. "Personally I think that Manon with all her fine feelings for Monsieur Nicolas is setting her cap at him. . . ." (and then she spoke so low that I could not hear). "You think so?" exclaimed Thérèse. "I would go bail for it." "Oh, that's my sister all over!" said Manon. "Always rash judgments." "All the same it's true," continued Berdon aloud. "It may be the mistress or the servant, but he loves some one in the house." "The servant!" exclaimed Agnès disdainfully. "What do you mean, *the servant*?" said Berdon imitating her tone. "Don't you realise that Toinette is a beautiful girl?" *Agnès.* "Yes, but she is . . . a servant." *Berdon.* "If Mademoiselle Toinette is a servant, Monsieur Nicolas is a peasant." *Agnès.* "He comes of a good family." *Berdon.* "Monsieur Nicolas's father works in the fields; Ma'm'selle Toinette's father works in the fields." *Manon.* "If he loves anyone in the house, it is not the servant." *Thérèse.* "I should think it was . . . because if one is a little too low, the other is much too high; and it is easier to look down than up." *Manon.* "You are wrong, Cousin: it is pleasanter to look up than down." *Agnès.* "From all of which I conclude that he loves neither." "What does it matter to us anyway?" said Berdon crossly. . . . "Burat made me laugh with a story about Yon and the elder Mamselle Blonde. . . ." (Maîne's sister) . . . "Imagine, he wanted to see her legs, which are very pretty." "Yes, and they are all she has," said Thérèse. "All she has!" exclaimed Manon. "Men have told me. . . ." "They have told you all sorts of nonsense which I trust you will not repeat," interrupted Berdon. . . . "He saw her going down the Place Saint-Étienne with the demoiselles Bard and the demoiselles Imbert, and ran on ahead to hide in the City passage. He lay down flat on his stomach in a dark corner, and as she was passing, stuck out his head to see as much as possible. She was taken short, and turned her back on him: the place was lonely as well as dark, so she pulled up her skirts and, half squatting, with her behind right over Yon, she thoroughly baptised him: he did not lose one drop. . . . He dared not even breathe, as you may well imagine; although the torrent forced him to clench his teeth and shut his eyes. . . . When she had finished she saw that one of her gold brocade slippers (for she is very nice about this part of her dress) had got into some sort of dirt: she had already noticed something that felt like a rag under her feet, so she looked about for something to lean against, and having steadied herself, wiped her slipper on poor Yon's jabot. Like all clerks who are constantly appearing before the senior magistrates, he is very natty in his dress. Then she went away quite unsuspecting. Yon got up at once, his new coat completely soaked – luckily it was dark! – his shirt and breeches full of water; and his jabot, hand-embroidered by Morelle, not only dirty but exhaling an odour not in the least like flowers. To crown his misfortunes, he had to cross the most populous quarter of the town to get home. . . . He was wondering what on earth to do, when two of his friends, Paquiau the attorney and Lefèvre the notary, happened to pass: 'You're in the devil of a mess!' exclaimed Paquiau. 'I have met with a little accident; put me between you and take me to your house.' 'That's all very well,' replied Paquiau, 'but you smell devilish strong! . . . What is it?' Lefèvre burst out laughing, saying: 'It is . . . it is . . . I think it is ****.' 'Gad, so it is!' answered Paquiau, after making sure. 'What the devil kind of an adventure have you had?' 'A very dirty adventure,' said Lefèvre. 'A truce to all that, and get me to Paquiau's house. Then send your servant to fetch me linen and a suit.' 'Yes, but you will have to tell us what happened.' 'Not until I have changed.' 'No, first, by Gad, or we will leave you as you are.' 'Zounds! Do you want me to retch at every word? It isn't the water; I would not mind the water. It is the ****, it is the ****.' 'We understand: it is the ****. If it was only ****, we might believe that you had just fallen: but you're soaked . . . (Lefèvre sniffed), and soaked . . . with the gravy of the rest, if I know anything . . . and covered with spiders . . . and plaster and lime and sand. . . . You must tell us everything, or we will walk you through the whole town like a prize ox!' 'If I must tell you, an old housekeeper threw the canon's chamber over me. I had slipped, trying to climb up to examine her at close quarters, and this is the result.' They had no choice but to believe him; so Paquiau took him to his house, where he was cleaned up and given linen and a black suit. Before he went out again he asked for a pen and two sheets of stamped paper. As he is clerk to the Criminal Court, they did not know what this meant. First he wrote on rough paper, then made a fair copy and, tearing up the draft, threw it into the fireplace. He sealed the envelope and went out. No sooner was he in the street than Paquiau and Lefèvre, who had been watching him, collected the pieces of the draft, put them together on a table, and read a full account of the adventure, very much as I have just told it to you; M. Yon had reported it as though it were a case in court, and was sending it to Mlle Blonde, as a jest. He took advantage of this excellent opportunity to pass sentence of love; saying, among other things, that she could never have any husband but himself, seeing that he had contemplated certain charms which no other than a husband should ever see."

At the end of the story, I inadvertently burst out laughing, and the four girls realised that there was some one in M. Parangon's upper room. I ran downstairs and told Toinette about Yon's misadventure, and begged her to say that it was she who had overheard them and burst out laughing, if anyone mentioned the matter.

I had scarcely finished, when some one knocked at the street door, and I hid in M. Parangon's closet, while Toinette opened it. It was pretty Marote, maid to the demoiselles Baron. "Toinette," she said, "who is in that room upstairs?" "No one, child." "But some one has just laughed there." "Ah, that was some one . . . who is still laughing at the story of M. Yon the Recorder. Tell that to your young ladies." Thus Toinette played the Jesuit very cleverly, and Marote unconsciously completed the deception; for, seeing no one but Toinette indoors, she said that it was Toinette who had been in the upper room and overheard the story of M. Yon, and that she had roared with laughter . . . and was still laughing. In saying this Marote did not go beyond the facts as she had understood them, so, by sharing the lie between them, both girls kept a perfectly clear conscience. . . . What a great man was the Jesuit Escobard! he had as much imagination as this young girl of Toury. Thus ended the 21st of July. The 22nd was occupied by other events.

I had seen Mlle Fanchette for a moment, when my parents had taken me to Vermenton to introduce me to the printer, and I had thought her charming; that was on the 6th of May, 1751, three years and three months previously. She looked about twelve then; so she should now be about fifteen. Mme Parangon had asked her father to send the girl to Paris: not to M. Parangon's sisters, but to her brother the lawyer; and as she herself was obliged, for private reasons which will be disclosed later, to go to the

Capital shortly after, she proposed that Fanchette should stay there for six months, and come back with her on her return. . . . So this was really the first meeting between Fanchette and myself.

I saw Fanchette at dinner about an hour after her arrival, and was dazzled by her beauty. She was a blonde, and the fairest newly opened flower imaginable: her hair was golden (her sister's was ash-blonde and very fine) and her complexion delicately bright; her face was cast on noble lines, and yet (unlike her sister's) had something a little rebellious in it; her figure was admirable, with all the slenderness of her fifteen years; hand, arm and all else were perfectly finished; her silvery voice was high-pitched without offending the ear; her speech a little husky and with a coaxing quality that was attractive; she laughed readily and with a childlike grace, was lively, volatile and gay, and had good taste and style (qualities which have such power over the hearts of men!). Such was Mlle Fanchette when she left for the Capital, where she would add still further to her graces. She was very like her sister; that little air of stubbornness, which took somewhat from the nobility and goodness of her face, marked also the only difference in character between these amiable sisters. . . . When I came into the parlour, Fanchette was being entertained by M. Parangon, who, laughingly, was behaving as though quite mad about her, while she, on her side, saw to it that her brother-in-law's freedom did not exceed the bounds of strictest decency. I greeted her shyly. How I feared to lose her! . . . I was enchanted to find I was to sit beside her. She addressed me often, and her manner to me was sweet and even intimate; hope returned and I felt pleased and flattered. I tried to make myself agreeable, but I do not know if I succeeded: a cloud was before my eyes. She showed a quick intelligence. For example, if she spoke to me graciously, she would immediately after address some remark to Bardet, Bourgoin, or Loiseau, yet more gracious and playful in tone and manner, as though she would forestall comment. I adored her for this; because I was very much afraid of M. Parangon, whose plans were by no means favourable to mine; he wanted Fanchette for a nephew of his, who had lived with him for a time between our first introduction and my arrival in the town. To put a crown on my interior satisfaction, Fanchette talked about my parents, and described an important service that my father had just rendered to the people of Sacy, by negotiating a good price for their share of the communal-woods. The money so obtained was to be used to bring the drinking and washing fountain, which was a long way off, into the middle of the village. He had been helped by that excellent pastor, Antoine Foudriat, who, defying the opinion of his most important parishioners, had put public utility in front of some necessary repairs to the church. Whenever Antoine mentioned this aqueduct, he gave all the credit to the Lieutenant; while the Lieutenant affirmed that he could have done nothing without the intelligent and generous help of the pastor. Fanchette knew this for a fact because first my father and then the pastor had visited her father, and M. Collet, a friend of both of them, had said to Antoine laughing: "Which am I to believe? Monsieur Restif says that you are the best man in the district, and you say that he is; I will make your statements agree, Monsieur le Curé, by saying that you are both excellent men: you as pastor, and he as judge and citizen; and as you are both equally my friends, I am equally pleased that this should be so. Let us drink to the health of our absent friend, who, I vow, will do as much for you the very next time we come together again." M. Parangon smiled at this anecdote: "Our little sister tells a story well. She assumes the very voice and manner of her papa. . . ." "I am infinitely obliged to Mademoiselle," I said, seeing that no one else spoke, "for relating an anecdote about her father so creditable to my own." "Everyone knows that he is the perfection of honesty," said M. Parangon, "but this lays a heavier obligation on his children than on those of other men."

On leaving the table, Mme Parangon, who had something important to say to me in the presence of her sister, found a pretext to get us openly in her room together: she sent me to fetch a wrap which I could not possibly find; and, as I was long away, ran upstairs herself with a show of impatience, and Fanchette followed her. . . . When we three were together without witnesses, she did . . . what she should have done six months or a year before: "Dear children," she said, "I have brought you together for a moment to say a necessary word to each of you. To you, sister, I say, here is your future husband; so pay no attention to other gallants; they are dangerous, above all in Paris! . . . And to you, Monsieur Nicolas, that you must make yourself a fit husband for my sister, by irreproachable conduct and by winning an honourable position: but, above all, by behaving henceforth in such a manner as to earn everyone's respect, for your establishment in a good position is not our greatest difficulty. There I can help you; I have ways of doing so. When I bring my sister home from Paris in seven or eight months, I shall lay my proposals before her, and anything I do will be with her knowledge. But the rest depends on you, and I shall be strict in the matter of all that depends on you. . . ." She put Fanchette's hand into mine; I kissed it, and then laid it against my heart. Madame Parangon must have partially confided in her sister, for Fanchette said: "My father thinks very well of you; I have heard him speak of you in terms of high praise!" "May I some day earn his good opinion!" I answered. Madame Parangon must have noticed the amazement in my eyes for, without going into detail, she said that she had her reasons for thinking that the marriage could be arranged, that it was unwise to consider certain obstacles too nearly, and that she had taken advice privately on the matter. And then she added: "Besides, my father wishes it." I was more flattered by this last remark than by anything I had ever heard in my life before; but, after what Madame Parangon had said about Colombe, I was as much moved by gratitude as by pleasure. More than ever did I feel my good fortune in having an enlightened friend. She wanted me to look upon my marriage with her sister as her work, and the strongest proof of her good will.

I was tongue-tied with Mlle Fanchette, so I kissed her hand repeatedly. She smiled and looked at her sister, surprised, no doubt, by my silence. She would have taken away but a poor impression of my intelligence, had not something that her sister said given me an opening. Talking to Fanchette, she said: "I do not know why papa and I are so strongly in favour of Monsieur" (indicating me), "but we both had the same idea directly we saw him, and before ever he came here; that was the time he called at our house on business with my eldest brother, when he was still at Courgis. Jacquette" (Madame Minon) "was describing what had happened while we were at supper, and I sided with the little Jansenist, as they called him. We noticed that Papa was looking grave, and, fearing that we might have displeased him, we stopped talking: then he spoke as follows: 'You are right, Colette, and you, Jacquette, are a little feather-pate. It does not please me at all to hear a girl make fun of bashfulness and modesty in a young man; and above all in that young man, who is my friend's son. And something in my heart tells me that that boy is no ordinary lad. I know him well, having seen him a hundred times in childhood at his father's house; and the anecdotes I have heard about him, his answers and his choice of amusements were not like those of ordinary children' (and he quoted the burning of my hand as an example). 'Moreover, there is no slavish or despicable taint in his blood; the old family of Bertrô, his maternal ancestors, have always been distinguished for their integrity; and, from his father, he inherits the finest blood in the universe. Only a fool is self-confident, because he is not conscious of his deficiencies: an intelligent lad, on the contrary, is bashful until he has gained experience, because he believes that everyone thinks and feels as he does, only better, and does what they ought to do: confidence only comes to him with maturity and when experience has shown him how far below him are most other men. Shyness is a mark of intelligence, self-confidence of stupidity; to blush is the sign of a pure heart, but impudence is the danger signal of every kind of vice. I like that young fellow, and I hope that his excellent father will not keep him at the plough; for he will do little good there, whereas elsewhere I think he could go far, and will do so with God's help, and time, and if men do not strangle his growth.' He remained serious after he had finished speaking. So we must follow his wishes, and make one of whom he thinks so highly his son-in-law."

My heart swelled with pride at these words, and I found the courage to speak: "The existence of sympathies can be no myth, Madame," I said, "for before ever I saw you or Monsieur your father, I never heard either your name or his uttered but with strong emotion and with pleasure. I do not know whether it was because whenever my father spoke of your father it was with great respect, and heartfelt praise of his integrity and generous behaviour; I do not know whether it was because my mother never called you by your name of Colette, without adding: 'That girl is all that is good and beautiful! . . .' But when I saw you in earliest childhood, I reflected that you were the girl of whom I had heard so much good; I trusted you, and you only. . . . And after I had left Vermenton, I used sometimes to climb to the top of Terrapion, whence I could see your town, and even place your house by means of the church, and say in a choking voice: 'Mamselle Colette, the good and the beautiful, is there!' and return home with a bursting heart. . . . When we visited your house again to be introduced to M. Parangon, my mother could not praise Mademoiselle Fanchette enough; and from that moment I felt the keenest interest in her. If I have the good fortune (which I scarcely dare even to think of) to win you some day for my companion, Mademoiselle, I shall hope then to prove that a possession long and hopelessly desired, not by myself only but by all my family, is the greatest and most precious of all possessions. I swear eternal fidelity to you, and call God to witness my vow; God in his own person and in his image, your most virtuous sister." "Are you willing to make the same promise and engagement?" Colette asked her sister. "With all my heart, my always dear one! What must I say to him?" "Give him some pledge. . . . What you like." Fanchette hunted; she pulled out various things which did not seem to her valuable enough. . . . At last she gave me her watch. I hesitated to accept it; but Mme Parangon made me a sign to do so. I kissed Fanchette's hand, saying: "But what can I give you?" "You were not prepared, but I thought for you," said Mme Parangon, and she gave me a much handsomer and more elegant watch, saying: "It is yours." "May I give it to her?" I exclaimed. "It is yours . . . but you may give it to her." I fastened the watch to Fanchette's girdle, with a chain suitable for a woman, and attached the man's chain to hers. "These gifts will remind you of each other. . . . Whichever of you . . . first forgets the other will lose me as a friend . . . irrevocably. . . . Go now, Monsieur Nicolas; I do not want your absence to be noticed." I went downstairs and hastened to get to work.

I was happy at this moment, yes, as happy as in those days before I lost my innocence. . . . Ah, how I adored . . . Mme Parangon! . . . For it was she whom I adored. Even pretty Fanchette's charms only touched me for her sister's sake; for Colette had a soul, but Fanchette was as yet too young. . . .

What a delightful day! Alas, looking down the immeasurable ages that have passed since then, it was the only one on which I was utterly happy. . . . In all those years, which seem twice eternity, weak Mortals of an hour, I have had only one half-day of happiness. . . .

Loiseau noticed my animation, my gentler behaviour and friendly words, and, as it were, an aura that radiated from me and surrounded me. We used to talk Latin sometimes, when Degout was absent, and he said to me: *"Aliquid supervenit novi? Si faustum, ut reor, gaudeo."* – *"Nihil felicius contingere poterat."* – *"Congratulor, et quid sit non peto, dum faustum sit."* I was silent, and Loiseau asked no more questions.

At supper that evening I was drunk with happiness. . . . [Ah, that is a state to envy! . . . Pity me not, you poor machines, who have never known what it is to feel! Pity me not for a moment, because I have been unhappy since and blameworthy; because, at sixty, I languish in misfortune, deprived of everything and without hope or consolation! Because my good fortune was illusory! My happiness was real at the time although its promise was never fulfilled. . . . A hundred thousand times rather to have felt and to have lost, than to have vegetated like you! Pity me not, you who live by rote: that were to blaspheme against happiness!.] . . . At supper I sat beside my little wife. . . . She was my wife; we had been joined together, and before she ceased to be so, it needed a double thunderbolt to steal away my second father and my second mother. . . . What sweet words she whispered to me, and how graciously she addressed me so that all could hear! How vainglorious I was, and proud! And I had reason to be, for I saw that Colette was happy! Her eyes were filled with tenderness when she looked at us, and she could find no words loving enough for her sister. My eyes thanked her, and she understood their language, and responded to it.

After supper M. Parangon went out for a game, and we three, I with a sister on either arm, started for a walk in full view of all the neighbours and received their greetings. Berdon saw me, and how my vanity was flattered! Oh, what an exquisite evening! We went the walk of my despair, which I had already retraced with Mme Parangon. But what a difference to-night! For I was with my two-fold mistress, two bodies, but only one soul: whether this or that of the two bodies mattered little to me; but the soul? . . . That belonged only to Colette. . . . Fanchette talked as does an amiable child who has been taught to show favour to a young man, and her artless chatter delighted her sister. I can feel how she would bewitch me now: only when he is set, can a man see and value merit in a young girl; but I was then myself standing on the borders of childhood, and appreciated and could only appreciate the developed, reasonable beauty of Mme Parangon's character. In just the same way our little Parisian Catos are a hundred times more serious at twenty-two than at fifty. . . . It was not that I did not love Fanchette: I would have been overjoyed to marry her and put her before all those others whose favour I had courted; but this was not because she was young and pretty, ravishing indeed, and virtuous in the same measure; but because she was Mme Parangon's sister. . . . I repeat, there has been but one passion in my life, but one woman, but one magnetic soul. I thought Jeannette was she; and adored her for the soul my fancy gave her, the soul which I actually found in Mme Parangon. . . . When I saw Jeannette I said to myself: "There at last is the embodiment of all my mind imagined! . . ." When I began to understand Colette, I thought: "This is how I should have imagined Jeannette would think and feel, if I had had the ability and goodness to imagine it." When I saw Edmée, I loved her as the living portrait of Jeannette. Manon Prudhôt and Madelon deceived my eyes, and my heart a little, by their way of dressing. Always it was the image of Mme Parangon I loved: and hers was the soul I fitted to Jeannette's body, whose soul I did not know. But it needs a body and a soul, a physical and moral complement, to make a woman; and I loved but one woman in Jeannette and in Colette. I did not love Colombe; I admired a beautiful girl. Love does not admit of doing what I did, almost under her eyes – though I was unaware of this. (Was this why Madame Parangon spoke about her as she did? Was she trying to tell me that passion was not solid enough to make a foundation for marriage? Or did she merely want to show an impartiality that left me free, on the very eve of the day I was to meet her sister? . . . We know that she herself said that she was well content that I should marry Fanchette without passion. . . .) In Marianne Tangis, it was the gentle sweetness of her enticing sex I loved, and not her person; that same gentleness and tender fondness which was one of Colette's perfections, and I think one of Jeannette's also. The extraordinary passion that Rose Lambelin inspired was certainly not love: there my mind was caught, and it is the only time a woman has ever moved me by her wit. Before, I loved them for their heart and beauty; since, I have loved their beauty, then their heart; but primarily their beauty. . . . Thus I can assure you, honest Reader, that only one spell has ever bound me; a charm that can be felt but not defined, and that I have never found in perfection save in Jeannette and Madame Parangon, though many other women have seemed to have something near to it. [For I will not class my later affection for Zéphire with these others; I loved her as tenderly as I did Madame Parangon, I set her above all others as I had Jeannette: but my feeling was of a different kind, though I was mistaken in its nature; moreover Zéphire was really as beautiful as Colette, and Jeannette Rousseau, and Edmée Servigné.] To get some impression of that noble face wherein, in the case of Madame Parangon, dignity was wedded to all alluring graces, look at the illustrations already mentioned in the *Paysan-Paysanne*. . . . Fanchette can be seen in the engraving where she is giving alms to Edmond; and there is no better likeness of Jeannette than Edmée at Vaux, in the same work. Edmée herself is well presented in the illustration where she is seen sitting by Edmond, while her sister gathers narcissi in the meadow bordering the Yonne. For Manon Prudhôt, see in the *Contemporaines* the third engraving in *Crises*, and the *Sous-fermière* in the same work is a portrait of Madelon Baron. Finally, in the two-hundred-and-sixtieth tale, *La Gouvernante de célibataire* is, feature for feature, the fair Colombe: face, expression, figure, costume and shoes. . . . But I was describing my walk with Fanchette and Madame Parangon.

It was Madame Parangon who chose our direction, and I appreciated the generous motives that prompted her: she wanted to take all shadow of sadness from my most usual walk, and replace it with the charm of her presence and that of her sister, on this the happiest evening of my life. I thanked her covertly. "We understand each other," she answered. "And

I, sister?" asked Fanchette ingenuously. "And you, dear child? You are the enchantment of my life, and through you I want and hope to find happiness." In an ecstasy of joy I kissed the hand of first one and then the other sister. I was unaware of any difference in my feeling towards them; I merely adored perfection, and, in my rapture, I thought Fanchette perfect, because I had been told that Fanchette was to be my wife. . . . Then Madame Parangon discussed her plans for us; and how splendid they were, how generous! Ah, what a friend I lost; my heart melts within me merely in the saying of it. . . . Reader, in two years and eight months, Colette was no more. And I, alas, still lived . . . unhappy, and always to be unhappy, save for rare moments when the clouds drew apart and let me glimpse the light. . . . My little sweetheart and I listened to Colette with an equal pleasure; Fanchette adored her sister, and, loving her, thought that she loved me too. . . . Thus there was but one mind between the three of us! We were moved by Colette's picture of the happiness awaiting us, if we could take advantage of our present opportunities and our natural gifts, and pressed each other's hand more tenderly. I paused at the spot where, in grievous circumstances, I had fallen prostrate through suffering. "How happy you have made me!" I said to Colette. "For long I have known you were no mortal. . . . Your sister is an angel, sweet Fanchette, clothed in a lovely body! She is our good angel." "What a nice idea!" exclaimed Fanchette, dropping my hand to throw her arms round her sister's neck. "My angel, my beautiful angel, kiss me! . . ." "I am your sister," answered Colette. "An angel could not love you as tenderly as I do." But I reiterated: "You are no mortal." (And I think I was genuinely convinced of this! Out of such imaginations as mine, religions and gods are born!) "You will never persuade me that you are no more than mortal; if I did not recognise it in your every action, my feeling for you would tell me that you are divine; for this is not . . . now . . . such as is inspired by a woman, however beautiful and gifted." "If you think in the same way of my Fanchette after you are married, I guarantee that you will be the happier of the two," she answered. "But I am a mere mortal." "Alas for me then!" "What a thing to say! And as you said it!" "Ah, did I say what was in my mind? I was carried away, as though another soul possessed me."

Dear Reader, what I have a thousand times reiterated about this angelic woman has a thousand times exceeded the bounds of probability! . . . Yet what I have written falls short a thousand times of the truth. . . . Since my outrage above all, she had amazed me. It is true that she relied a little too much on Loiseau; not that he was not well qualified to be all she hoped, but he had not as much influence over my mind as she thought his character, and the discernment she supposed in me, would give him. Loiseau was not admitted to all her secrets, nor to all of mine; and honestly thought he was serving my interests by concealing from her such of my lapses as he chanced to discover. And of these he did not discover all; I was extremely discreet concerning my adventures with women, and my note-books were shut away with unfailing care. But even if he had found out everything, Loiseau would never have betrayed me.

Fanchette was only staying with us for half a day, and left for Paris on the morrow with a Mme Leclerq, daughter-in-law of an old friend of my father. This Leclerq, becoming prodigiously rich through the timber trade, had dropped all his old friends. Unhappy in spite of his wealth, he lived all alone, save, since the acquisition of certain estates (Accolay among others, my mother's native place), for certain lordlings who made him pay for their friendship in humiliations and jests; for he had followed the plough as a boy. It was to him that a peasant, his messmate and his friend in former days but since forgotten, delivered an apologue often quoted in the district. He went to see Leclerq, not knowing that his habits were so changed; and the latter was very much astonished to see a peasant come right into his courtyard, order his horse to be put in the stable, and then come up the steps. This visitor was met by a lacquey in smart livery: "Whom do you want?" "Monsieur, I want my friend Guillaume." "Guillaume? Who is Guillaume? The coachman, the gardener, or one of the stable lads?" "No, by my faith, he is the master here!" The lacquey had been in the service of M. Leclerq's elder son, who lived in the town; he burst out laughing: "What name, please; I will announce you." "My name? Jacquot Dupré. . . . But what are you going to announce?" "Your visit." "To whom?" "To Monsieur Leclerq, my master." "Your master! Does Guillaume keep gentlemen for his servants?" "Yes, I am his lacquey." "Lacquey? What, are you only a lacquey, and you prevent me from coming in to say how-do-you-do to my friend Guillaume?" And as he spoke, the peasant took this young sir by the arm, and sent him spinning into a sort of easy chair intended for the use of ladies who came in to M. Leclerq's antechamber. Then he went straight in. "What is all this? Who are you?" asked M. Leclerq. "What? Don't you recognise me? Why, I am Jacquot Dupré, your old friend and schoolfellow." "Ah, it is you, Maître Jacques Dupré? I am charmed to see you." "No, no, you are not charmed. I can see that all right. . . . Oh, Guillaume, didn't you make your money honestly, that you are ashamed to meet an old friend and schoolfellow; one who rejoices in your good fortune every day, and says: See how God has blessed my friend Guillaume Leclerq! . . . Why I give thanks to Him for it in all my prayers; for I have always loved you as a brother. . . . Listen, Guillaume – for I can't call you Monsieur, I should feel I was insulting you and I would rather never speak to you again than that:

"In a certain village, there were once two sows, and each had one son. They dearly loved their little ones, and as they were good neighbours, the young pigs loved each other also. But as the latter began to grow up, they chose different lives and followed different ways. The cleverer one spoke as follows: 'There are only roots and worms in the fields, so I shall go into the woods and look for acorns which are much better, and I shall get fat. . . .' And he got fat; while the other, who was not so knowing, kept to the fields and ate nothing but worms and roots and the little bits of grain that were left on the ground after the harvest. And the mother of the fat pig said to the mother of the thin pig: 'Look at my son, neighbour. He has a better instinct than yours; for he has gone into the woods where he gets fat.' And the mother of the thin pig answered: 'I will wait and see what comes of it all, neighbour.' And the thin pig grew long and lanky and ugly, and he was always black and dirty; while the fat pig was round and plump and white and beautiful. One day when the two pigs were leaving home, one to go to the woods and the other to the fields, a butcher happened to pass by. He looked at the two pigs, and no fear warned them what he was. He did not bother himself about the thin pig; but he said to the fat pig: 'Monsieur,' said he, 'I have a great deal of power, and if you like I will help you, and you will become the chief among pigs.' The fat pig swelled with pride to hear himself called Monsieur by a man; for, whoever he is, a man is a greater lord than a pig; and he answered that he would like it very much. Then the butcher resumed: 'Seeing that we shall be travelling as two friends, Monsieur, we must be joined together; so I will tie one end of a cord to your foot behind, and the other to my hand in front.' The fat pig was quite willing. So he was securely tied to his great lord, and the butcher guided him politely, with little taps of a stick, into his own sty, where he fattened him up still more and some time after bled him, and ate him, and other men who were his friends ate with him.

"Guillaume, you are the fat pig, and I am the thin pig. You have grown fat in the woods; I have remained thin in the fields. . . . Goodbye. I bear you no grudge; I pity you with all your wealth. Take care that your gentlemen friends do not eat you up, or if they do not eat you, because you are too old and too tough, that they do not eat your children. I warn you."

When the peasant had finished speaking he turned to go; but Guillaume Leclerq ran after him and embraced him, and made him stay to dinner, and, in a word, showed him every sign of consideration: so much so indeed that, when one of his daughters, knowing nothing of Jacques Dupré, received some little caress of his disdainfully, her father boxed her ears, and made her get on her knees in front of Jacques, saying: "Learn, little snob, that I was born as my friend here, and that my friend has sense and a good heart; he is a firm friend, and has just given me some advice, which I hope to use for the good of your brothers and yourself." "God will bless you," said Jacques, "for I see by your behaviour now that you came by your wealth honestly. . . . Goodbye, Guillaume. . . . Goodbye Monsieur Leclerq. . . ." "Monsieur Leclerq!" exclaimed the latter. "I shall never be anything but Guillaume to you. . . . Farewell, my friend." "Ah," said Jacquot, "Your heart is still the same as when you were young, but I have found fault with you. There, I have spoilt our friendship. . . . Goodbye, Guillaume. . . ." And Jacques Dupré went away weeping. He never saw M. Leclerq again, and his lesson was very soon forgotten. . . .

Forgive the digression, dear Reader! What would you? Things come back to me, and involuntarily I write them down; and once written, I would think it a falsification to delete them.

Mlle Fanchette left by post-chaise with M. Leclerq's daughter-in-law. This latter was mistress of Accolay (the former heritage of my mother's family) and an excellent person. She had been let into the secret of our engagement and had undertaken to hand over Fanchette to her brother and sister-in-law. This was accomplished without misadventure, as we heard a week later when she wrote to us, enclosing a letter from Fanchette with hers. Early in the morning Madame Parangon escorted her young sister to the Petite-Madeleine, whence the post started, and took me with her; but as Bardet, Tourangeot and Jean Lelong were close behind with the baggage, little of interest was said. Colette gave her sister some advice; then repeated her recommendation to form no attachments and to treat the Paris fops with contempt, assuring her that she had met all varieties of them in the Capital, and that the most brilliant was not worth an honest Provincial, even in the eyes of a Parisian woman. These were her last words. Mme Leclerq was standing by the coach, and Mme Parangon introduced me to her and mentioned my mother's family, for which this lady showed a great respect. Fanchette got into the chaise first; I lifted her in my arms like a bird and set her down in it. I treated Mme Leclerq in the same way. "How strong you are!" she said. "It is as though I were a feather!" "He is no child of Paris, Madame," answered Colette. "That is quite obvious! . . . Farewell, Madame . . ." and to me: "Farewell, fellow countryman!" Fanchette kissed her sister, and held out her hand to me in front of my comrades. I dared not kiss it, but I pressed it, at the same time bowing in such a manner that it touched my forehead; and this brought a smile to

Fanchette's lips. . . . The chaise started. Mme Parangon stood watching it for a little while, the tears coursing down her cheeks, and I stayed motionless beside her. When the chaise was out of sight, she turned towards me: "Let us go," she said. . . . "I love that sweet sister of mine too well. . . . But tell me, does she not deserve it?" "Is it possible that you can dream of giving me such a treasure, Madame?" "Yes, and my father is even more decided . . . for . . . I had given up all thought of it . . . save to regret . . . but my father removed all my scruples. . . . You have a good friend there! . . ." "Oh, how I blush to be so little worthy! . . . Madame, it is a fact that I adore you, and it is this that gives me some worth in my own eyes. . . . To love perfection is not to be good, but it is to tend to become good." "My friend, you are not aware of the significance of your words; you spoke in all simplicity, I am sure, and so I will not scold you; nor will I tell you something that . . . might be imprudent. . . . My friend, I owe you my sister: let that suffice. I will explain my meaning after you have been married for two years, or perhaps three." I was listening greedily; but she said no more. I did not answer, and so we reached the house in silence.

I was sad at first after Fanchette's departure, and it was Madame Parangon herself who bade me seek distraction. She advised me to trust Loiseau, and announced her near departure. "But for part of the time that I am away from you, I shall be with another you," she added sweetly. "And for the other part, which I do not spend with Fanchette, this will belong even more to you, for I shall be solely occupied with . . . what concerns you personally." I had no idea what she meant by the last part of this remark, and, as it would have been unwise to explain it, she did not enlighten me. Only after her death did I discover her meaning. . . . She avoided me from this moment up to the time of her departure.

Left to myself, I gave free rein to my love for dancing; just as young country girls do while they are without ties, knowing full well that they will have to renounce all such amusements after they are married. My idea was to prepare myself to become a steady husband, very attentive to his business, by enjoying myself now without restraint; and country girls have just the same idea: they mean to become hard-working mothers of families with nothing to regret, whereas those who are prevented from dancing by mothers or absurd priests, spend their lives regretting their lost opportunity. The former do as did the daughter of Jephtha, who, after lamenting her virginity upon the mountains, came down and bowed her neck to her father's axe. Only they do not mourn their virginity, their freedom: they dance and rejoice in it. Then, when they are bent beneath household cares or beaten by a brutal husband, and one says to them: "Ah, and you used to be so gay, so charming!" they answer with a ready smile: "Yes, didn't I enjoy myself with the best? . . . Everything to its time, and it is the turn for work now. . . ." And they turn back to their task, content just to remember. Those who have been prevented, on the other hand, grieve for it all their lives, saying: "Ah, if I had only enjoyed myself as a girl! . . . But work, nothing but work! Why was I ever born?" O barbarous Jansenists, you have been pitied at times, when persecuted by such as Louis XIV and Fleury; but, just God, you make joy an offence, and are of all sectaries the most dangerous, the most worthy of persecution! Yet there was no need to do more than scorn you; or rather, instead of exiling such melancholy madmen, instead of shutting you up and making martyrs of you, you should have been forced to dance with your pretty penitents until nature made herself heard in your withered hearts! . . . Eh, but where was I? I was telling how my love of dancing took hold of me again.

On Saint-Germain's day, the 31st of July, I danced the *Aimable Vainqueur* for the first time in public. It was at La Maris's, under the admiring eyes of Aglaé Ferrand and her sisters and their Aunt; of the Mlles Douy, Laurent, Guiller, Gandon, Lucot, Rezard, Joan, Lambrin, Julien, Pouillot, Maîne Lebègue, Huot and Morillon; and of the chambermaids Julie, Agathe, Marianne, Percinette, Nannette, etc.; and of several girls of the riverside: Bouzon's sister, the sister of Moutré-Point-d'âme, and Salé's sister; and of several young tripe-sellers from the *Rue des Cornes*: Martinette who was Bouzon's mistress, Marienne who was Moutré's, and Pèlerine, mistress of that Joussier-Patagon, whose horse knew his way about the port as a man knows his Pater; and finally of the two sisters Duchamp, the sand-seller and the goatherd. (And if I had had duchesses and marchionesses, or merely good middle-class folk, for admiring audience, I would have told you just the same, Reader.) "Lud, he can dance!" said Martinette to Bouzon the boat-woman. . . . My pride in this small success was further gratified by the arrival of the servant Lelong, who came in to tell his future sister-in-law, Marianne, that her mistress was asking for her, and so was witness of my triumph; I foresaw that he would make a fine story of it next day in the printing-room, and strove to surpass all praise. Lelong fulfilled this expectation beyond my hopes, and my judicious colleagues thought much more highly of me for cutting a few capers than if I had done some noble deed.

In the evening I made a new acquaintance in Aimée Julien (not Gonnet's mistress), who was the youngest of three attractive sisters. These little intrigues, scarcely even ruffling the senses, were not dangerous. Aimée, for instance, gave me just one agreeable moment, intense indeed, but never repeated. . . . I will describe it by-and-bye.

But that very evening, I was powerfully distracted from my new affection! . . . After having left Aimée and her sisters, I took a roundabout way home, and found myself in the Rue de la Cloche-Bleue, with my friend Dhall's gate on one side and Manon Léger's on the other, and within twenty paces of Tonton's house. I was very much surprised to see the latter sitting in the middle of a circle; the two sisters Dhall were there, the two Légers, Mlle Douy, and a tall pretty girl, Mlle *Pointe*, a friend of Rose Lambelin. . . . Tonton was talking eagerly, not to the girls but to their brothers, who were standing about the circle. . . . Directly she caught sight of me, she fell silent. However, she summoned me. I appeared to hesitate, without other reason than that Tonton was too much surrounded. "I suppose you want to be begged to come," exclaimed Baras-Dallis, whom I had not noticed sitting between Mlle Douy and young Gremmerey. They put me in the middle of the circle, and asked if I had any news of Colombe. "No," I replied, speaking to Manon Léger, "if you want news, you must ask the demoiselles Ferrand." "I told you he knew nothing!" exclaimed Tonton. "Come, come, he has better luck than that . . . and after all he deserves it." I did not know what to say; I was vexed at having been caught in this way. But Tonton bothered little about what I answered. I have never been able to understand the way this girl behaved: she allowed herself to be courted, in front of her neighbours, by five or six lads, who put no constraint upon themselves. Before matters had gone too far, I paid some tender compliments to the elder Dhall, and felt how dangerous she might have been for me had my position been otherwise. . . . It seemed to me that Eulalie Gremmerey was less to be feared: she was more seductive although not so beautiful. Mlle Dhall was a second Émilie Laloge, as Marianne Tangis was a first Eulalie Gremmerey. In the meantime the men had exceeded all bounds with Tonton, going as far as to touch her breast. Directly they saw what was happening, the girls got up and gathered round me, entreating me to take her away: "Because you are the best behaved," they added kindly. I offered my hand to the exiled Tonton and the sisters took charge of their respective brothers. Tonton cheerfully took my arm, and began to describe her various adventures, no doubt to keep me with her. She had been seduced by the Premonstrant Barbier, one of the three assistant priests at Notre Dame-là-d'hors, a parish served by a Prior of that Order. Afterwards she had lent a kindly ear to Gonnet; then to me; and then to Fusier, though she had at first repulsed him; then to various ecclesiastics: Molinists, Cordeliers and Capuchins. (Later I heard from her own lips that she had had the most reverent Father in God, Condorcet, Bishop of Auxerre.) She gave herself without reason or self-interest, for the sole pleasure of giving and of changing her men. For a week, in 1757, she was a prostitute in a bad quarter of Paris, and there conceived so great a horror of debauch that she turned honest woman for the rest of her life. Some time after this disastrous episode, she married a snuff and tobacco seller of the *Rue Grange-Batelière*, who was quite satisfied with her; and I know that she never again went astray after this change of heart and of estate. . . .

As I was saying, Tonton related her adventures to me. When she had finished, she took my hand and laid it on her white, firm breast; one of the most beautiful imaginable. If spark meets tinder, fire is the result. . . . Complete satisfaction was necessary. An observation must be made in passing.

In 1768, I took my little novel *La Confidence Nécessaire* to a certain coxcomb of an abbé, Simon, censor royal and librarian to Dom Clermont, prince of the blood and general of the Benedictines, and was very much surprised by his comment. I had set down in my book what I had myself seen, and he protested loudly that it had not even a shadow of probability! "Such girls do not exist! . . ." I let him talk, and having recopied my manuscript, which he had scrawled with erasions and festooned with marginal notes, I gave it a new title, looked for another censor, and finally took my book to Lebrun-Meaupou, who made no difficulty about initialling it, and praised its truth to contemporary manners and the naturalness of its style. In spite of priestly tyranny and the abbé Simon (now canon of Saint-Quentin), *La Confidence* was printed, with a note against him and his like. . . . The abbé Simon was a fool, in whom learning had only nourished self-conceit; Lebrun-Meaupou was a man of the world with common-sense.

On the following Sunday, the 4th of August, Tonton Lenclos was at la Maris's ballroom. Her behaviour on the evening of our last meeting had already got abroad. She came up to me and began scolding: "You have completely disappeared and I never see you, in spite of all your promises." "I have had a great deal to do." "What, now that the fair Fanchette has gone? . . . But how stupid I am! You have to console her big sister." I was shocked at this bold reference to Madame Parangon, and also to hear Mlle Fanchette's name uttered by such a mouth! (Was my own more pure?) I did not answer. We began to dance, but Aglaé Ferrand whispered to me: "Gracious, what they are saying about that girl! Don't let us stay here with her: come away! . . . I will give the word to these young ladies; the men will follow us and we will come back when she has left." I have no love for such proceedings, but in this case I could not refuse. Mme Maris, however, who had not heard Aglaé's last words, put the blame on me, and said it was indeed strange when peasants cried shame on girls of the town! Aglaé did not let this remark pass: "Madame Maris never forgets her first trade." This from a girl who was one of her best clients closed La Maris's mouth, and I left with the others; but I slipped down the *Rue Duchamp*, so as to return alone, dance with Tonton, and escort her home. The sound of the violin told me that more people had arrived; and on entering the room I saw Tonton in a corner surrounded by Salle, Piffou, Lacour and Cauchois, all owners of boats, who were treating her like a public woman without La Maris appearing to mind. I pretended only to have gone out to satisfy a need, and rescued her by claiming my dance. This earned me a smile from Mme Maris, who dared not speak to these men, although they were only bargees. Tonton thanked me aloud, and we left after I had danced my two minuets with her. I took her home by back streets without being seen by anyone, but had considerable difficulty in getting rid of her; she seduced my senses in spite of myself. On my return, I found all those who had left the ballroom from a sense of delicacy had come back again. Aglaé said to me: "I wager you took her away?" "What would you? She is of your sex." "No, no," she said, turning her back on me, "she is not." Then La Maris spoke up, and said that I had behaved very properly and she was much obliged to me. None the less, Mlle Ferrand sulked with me: and from this I realised that Colombe had told her, by letter or by word of mouth, of her request that I should never see Tonton again; that Aglaé knew that I had promised, and was outraged by this violation of my word. She never forgave me, and I have reason to think that she set Colombe against me; but that troubled me little at the time: on the contrary, I felt that it was better that Colombe should despise me somewhat rather than think too highly of me. Thus my mind was undisturbed.

A word here to finish the story of Aglaé, whose fortunes never touched mine save indirectly. When her lover, Durand Sougères, went away to

Paris, Aglaé was very unhappy; and some months later seized on a pretext for going to the Capital. There she met Sougères, who had found it impossible to love his cousin because she was not a lovable person. So he made certain proposals to Aglaé, who was already pregnant, which she accepted. They lived together as husband and wife, and she was brought to bed of a daughter who caused her mother's death. He made arrangements for the child and, when she was ten years old, adopted her, and made his wife adopt her as a distant relative of his. She died at fifteen, and from that moment Durand felt that he had lost Aglaé altogether. He died of grief.

All the town made holiday on the 9th of August. The townsfolk slavishly put on their best to welcome the new Prince of Condé, who was passing through the town for the first time on his way to hold the Burgundian Parliament. In the evening I fetched Aimée Julien and her sisters to see the illuminations, and hear the town's solitary cannon fired, a small field-piece which had been left standing on a hillock between the Égleny gate and the Temple gate. We sat down on the boulevard outside the walls. Aimée was beside me, and already practically in my arms, when the cannon was let off; then with a little scream, she threw herself right into them. . . . I was electrified by this contact; all the sensations of love thrilled through my veins and, from that moment when I held her in my arms and snatched half a kiss, I found Aimée a hundred times more attractive. The day seemed long until I saw her, and I used to say over the song:

Another day, –
I long for night!
Night comes: I pray
For morning light.

I saw evening come with rapture, and sped to her. . . . But this passion was as brief as its origin was slight, and I soon began to neglect her. Moreover I had many other things to think of!

It seemed to me that Mme Parangon's health was not the same. On Sunday, the 11th of August, she was in her chair just as I was going out; I paused, and then approaching her respectfully said with some hesitation:

"Forgive me, Madame, but have you any worries that I might share?" "Why do you ask?" "Do you suffer at all, or do you feel any pain?" "You are only asking another question instead of answering mine." "Because I . . . am . . . very anxious about your health. I may be mistaken; probably I am mistaken. . . . I hope so at any rate!" "No, I am not ill; there is nothing really the matter with me, and I have no new worries; I am just as usual. But I long for my sister . . . or rather I am anxious about her where she is. However, I wanted her to go. To hold you captive, my friend, your wife must have all the graces. I understand you better than you understand yourself, and could see you in love with every girl in this town without the least anxiety; for Fanchette, with the charming ways and manners that she will acquire in Paris, will soon efface all such light impressions. Moreover, it is a good thing for you to get over all that before you are married, and these affairs will polish up your wit. See them all, make love to them all; sicken yourself with the emptiness of it, and do not be like M. Parangon, who was very well-behaved and very much the bear when a bachelor, but afterwards. . . . Still the Paris which gives us elegance and polish may also teach many vices, and Fanchette's happiness and yours is too important, too dear to me, for me to neglect any precaution. . . . I shall leave here in a fortnight. . . . You can see for yourself that this journey is necessary, and a fresh proof of my friendship for you?" "Yes, yes, Madame. . . . It is useful and necessary . . . but it hurts!" "I should be grieved if it did not. . . . It makes me very happy to think that you like your sister near you . . . your sister who loves you . . . dearly. . . ." "I can never say anything but she answers it divinely, and so adds to my . . . and my admiration!" I murmured, raising my eyes to heaven. . . . We were alone, and I knelt at her feet. . . . She looked at me so kindly that, I confess it, I was misled (most assuredly misled!) into thinking . . . that her tenderness was not devoid of weakness . . . that perhaps she would not be angry if . . . and I kissed her hand. She started at the contact of my burning lips, and I threw my arms about her waist . . . that masterpiece of grace and elegance. "Get up; that attitude is not becoming," she said smiling, but with the queenly dignity that was hers at will.* I was dumbfounded, paralysed. "Get up," she said again. I rose and sat beside her; and she gazed into my eyes: "I can read your heart; I know what you were thinking, and . . . I forgive you. . . . I do not blame you . . . for what you thought; only it is my duty to change your point of view. . . . I have decided on this visit for three reasons: my sister needs me, at least I think so. I need to be alone; my life here and the people about me interfere with what I want to do and must do. Also I am glad to be away from you for a little; for I will not attempt to disguise . . . what you have probably seen for yourself, and much sooner than I expected! . . . I love you, but as a sister. I have made myself feel so. Suppose I had been free perhaps. . . . But no supposing. . . . You are among those dearest to me in the world; my father and my sister are not more so, for you dwell with them in the sanctuary of my heart. . . . I have a request to make: remember this conversation when you are Fanchette's husband, and make her as happy as . . . I should have been . . . with . . . you. . . . Virtue blushes for this confession, I know . . . but I make it, not to encourage a

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*See the 24th illustration, *Paysan-Paysanne pervertis,* which depicts this scene.

criminal inclination, but to extinguish it. . . . For this, dear friend, is my point of view: I was easily able to forgive . . . a violence; I could never have forgiven . . . at least unless my character deteriorated . . . seduction, with my complicity . . . I have deplored your crime, but I have utterly and sincerely forgiven it, so that God himself may forgive you. Now judge whether the thought you had (for you no longer have it) was well founded! . . ." I ventured to embrace her ecstatically: "I could be in the same bed with you," I exclaimed, "without your having anything to fear from me. . . . And . . . you know whether I love you!" "I have never doubted it, and I have set no guard about my heart against a feeling which I share in spite of myself; only death can quench it, so I have let it stay. But I have resolved to do two things: to be faithful to my duty, and to give you my sister. I had scruples, but I consulted no spiritual director or woman friend about them. A woman's proper guide when she has lost her mother, is her father, while he is alive; and afterwards her husband, if he is worthy . . . in his life. . . . I threw myself into my father's arms; I told him everything; I did not try to extenuate my leaning towards you at your expense; I told everything, repeated everything, as it came back to me. My confession was accompanied by tears – not bitter tears, no, I will not lie; they were sweet, and I confessed as much to my father, noblest and most estimable of men. . . . Judge how I love you, friend, since I love you as much as he." (At these words I prostrated myself at her feet. . . . I wanted no more favours, my desire was quite other: I longed with incredible vehemence to die adoring her. What a strange desire! I should have been happy in it had it been less violent, but it carried me beyond that, and gods alone can endure extremes. . . . She waited until I was somewhat recovered before continuing.)

"My father listened to my plans for myself and approved of them. Then he made me repeat those which concerned my sister, and expressed his wish that they should be carried out. I laid all my scruples before him. . . . What a father sanctions is legitimate; he is the mouth of God made visible to his children. . . . I found excuse for what you had done in all the evidences of passion I had noticed in you, and when I had described these, my father said: 'That love is eternal; passing clouds may obscure it, as they already have, but it is eternal! . . . We must make it legitimate, and there is only one way to do this, which will be the same for you also; you shall love him as a brother; for I see now that you have loved him without being aware of it ever since you first saw him as a child. He was your first love. If fathers were omniscient they would not make mistakes. . . . Your sister is a sweet girl, but were she not so he would make her a good husband simply because she is your sister. I know the character of his family, both on the father's and the mother's side, and I am delighted to be allied with such excellent stock. It is not exempt from passion; on the contrary, there are perhaps no more passionate men in France. You have forgiven him; now I forgive him also, and may God forgive him!' Then I told him about your grief and your despair, and he rose and thanked God. Afterwards he said: 'It is what I should expect. If he had not made reparation to God by his repentance, and to you by his respect, he would have been untrue to the two, the three families whence he sprang. . . .' So now, friend, you know what my father thinks." "Yes, yes! . . . O almighty God, be gracious to him! . . . And I swear by your holy name that Edme Restif will be no dearer to me than Nicolas-Bénigne C . . ." "He is in fact your second father, and yours will be a second father to my sister. . . . I am very pleased that you should know everything before I go. One can never tell what may happen, and now you can go confidently to my father, and he will arrange the marriage. . . ." "In the name of God, Madame, deign to tell me if you have reason for fearing anything? . . . I entreat you with clasped hands." "No, my condition . . . is . . . natural. . . . But it is also natural to die. . . . I cannot tell you more. . . . Some day perhaps, if it becomes necessary, there will be no reservations, and I will tell you everything you ought to know, while enjoining great discretion!" I was comforted by the words *"some day, perhaps,"* and I could see no dangerous illness to be afraid of.

Colette rose, and her figure, though still perfection behind, seemed somewhat to have changed its shape in front: but I thought nothing of it. She leaned out of the open window and beckoned me to approach, and together we looked out into the street. A pregnant woman passed, and Colette gazed at her intently, leaning half out of the window to keep her in sight. I caught her round the waist, exclaiming: "You will fall out!" She turned away and leaned a moment on my shoulder; then she made me shut the window and ring for Toinette, who appeared immediately. "Go now," said Colette, "for Toinette and I have something to do. . . ." I went downstairs and looked after the shop until Toinette returned. I had meant to send her for a walk, while I looked after the place, but Mme Parangon ordained otherwise, and I was the one to be sent away.

Gaudet and Burat, assistant to M. Bourgoin the surgeon, with Colombat and young Nombret, M. Antoine Foudriat's nephew, caught sight of me as I was leaving the house, and carried me off for the end of Vespers at the Cordeliers and a meal afterwards. D'Arras made us a sign, and, with the last jawful (Gaudet's phrase), joined us, and suggested something to eat and a game of bowls in the garden. Nearly all the Cordeliers were there. Gaudet d'Arras told me privately that his business would soon be settled, but that he was keeping the matter secret from everyone except myself, by the advice of the Warden, his best friend. In exchange for this confidence, I told him of Mme Parangon's approaching journey to Paris. "Let her go," he said, "this journey is the greatest honour to you; only remember that you have other resources. . . . Our partnership holds good. . . ." I did not in the least understand how Mme Parangon's journey could be a *great honour* to me. . . . Had Gaudet d'Arras been told anything by Manon, to whose mother Colette had been obliged to reveal her condition? . . . "You do not know all that I have done for you yet . . ." he continued. "And I really don't know whether I ought to tell you. . . . But why not? You remember that time when you had Flipote? . . . Well, at the same time, a charming woman from Dijon was staying with us (that is with Madame Bourgoin), who had been deceived by a lover; she had tested him by pretending to be pregnant, and he deserted her. Burning with a thirst for vengeance, she asked my advice. . . . I considered the matter and, as she had already incurred disgrace, could think of nothing more appropriate than to give her a child by a young man who would never see her and would think he was possessing some one else. . . . I pointed you out to her, and she agreed. Flipote slept in Mlle Bourgoin's room, and . . . it was the fair Omphale. . . ." "Good God!" I exclaimed, and Gaudet d'Arras began to laugh: "I have given you many others! By the way, what was it Lenclos was telling me? A little girl . . . behind the Consuls?" "I know, I know," I answered blushing. "I warn you, she is in the family way. . . ." I turned pale. "Don't worry; I will take her off your hands. . . . She belongs to me. . . . As I cannot take Manon to Troyes, where I shall have to spend some time on business, and still less Mlle Hollier or Mme L3n1rd, I had thought of asking for Goton or

Marianne Geolin to act as my housekeeper in two senses. . . . But when I heard of your frolic with little Marianne, I had a double reason for choosing her. She's fixed up. . . . No thanks! I only did it for my own sake. . . " he added laughing. I did not know what to say to all this, which was not difficult to interpret: for I was filled with gratitude. My friend was rich, and was soon to be free; I saw that he meant to make little Marianne his mistress, to oblige me and to prevent her from taking any steps against me. But Mme Parangon's *friend* might well suffer from remorse at the thought that Gaudet d'Arras, once tired of this poor girl whose seduction he had completed, might leave her to fall into an evil life. I compared this conversation with the one that had preceded it, and was sad for the rest of the evening, though Gaudet d'Arras had spared nothing to make the meal most excellently good. . . .

A happy life, says some one. Yes, it was the happiest period of mine, but it is not these picnics that I look back on with most pleasure.

The day of Mme Parangon's departure arrived sooner than she had led me to expect; I do not know whether she intentionally misled me or whether she was constrained to hasten it. She left on Thursday the 15th of August, the anniversary of my dream about Madelon. I had meant to keep this day, and had already begun to do so the day before, by calling to mind my bitter remorse on the evening of that other 14th, after Mlles Paintendre and Roullot had vindicated her character. But on leaving the table after supper, Mme Parangon, in front of everyone, asked for my arm and escort to the house of Mlle Bourgoin. I was the only one who did not know that she was leaving, doubtless because she feared lest my morose abstraction should be too noticeable. Toinette had indeed dropped a hint; but she dared not go against the wishes of her mistress, who wanted to tell me herself. No sooner had we started, than Mme Parangon said almost timidly: "You are going to have a little surprise! To-morrow. . . ." "What, Madame?" "To-morrow I leave to join Fanchette. . . ." "To-morrow!" "I decided after I had spoken to you: the reasons I gave you for going impressed me as important. . . . I recommend my Toinette to you. . . . One of the things which has strengthened my affection for you is your behaviour with Aimée, and Tiennette, and with her whom I now put under your protection. . . . I shall stop three days at Sens on my way to Paris: that is why I am going by water, it leaves me free to do so. It is on your account and on my sister's that I am stopping there. My father knows all about it, and is helping me. . . . I repeat that this journey rightly understood is only for your good; for my sister's interest can no longer be separated from yours. . . . My father was unable to come here before I left, but he has suggested a visit, and, should he come, you will know your duty." "I shall be terrified of him!" "Do not dream of such a thing! . . . For the rest," she added, after a moment's reflection, "just be yourself. Behave with discretion. You must not write to me: I refuse the permission in advance which you have not yet asked; on no account must you do so. But you may write once or twice to Fanchette, and, if there is anything that it is necessary for me to know, you can convey it in veiled language, and I shall understand." As we were about to enter Manon Bourgoin's house, she added: "I am just going to say goodbye to Manon; she is not very well and should she ever need your help, anything you do for her will be done for me. So come and see her every day, but for a moment only because of gossip; you will take my place with her, you and Toinette; and if she asks you to send Toinette, do so, but give the message privately. . . . You notice that we choose you rather than her cousin. That is her own wish. . . . Follow Loiseau's advice; but do not confide anything to him that concerns Manon or myself: not that I distrust him, quite the contrary; but there must be no confidences, no chatter in our relationship. We mut get used to this soon, and there must be no exception. . . . Let us go in now." We did not pause to see Manon's father or mother, but knocked at once on her door.

She opened the door herself, and seemed cheerful enough, though rather pale. She kissed Mme Parangon warmly: "I am entrusting you with what I hold dearest, after one other whom you know," she said, and had just spoken these words when Gaudet d'Arras came in in secular dress, at which neither lady showed any surprise. "My case is settled," he said to me. "I am free, and am leaving at once to join my father at Troyes. No one knows anything about either my appeal or my release, for as it was not a civil case, it was never taken into court; it has not been recorded, everything was settled quietly. The Superiors of the Order had no interest in opposing my claim because I praised their conduct instead of making complaints. My father claimed me from them, that was all. The Warden, my good friend and second father, gave me excellent testimonials, adding that I neither could nor should refuse the reasonable demands of my *uncle* (you know my history). . . ." Then, pointing to Manon: "She became my wife this morning. Everything was done in secret; the less publicity the better when it is a question of happiness, for it is a tender plant that loves the shade. Now you are up-to-date with my personal affairs. I know you are discreet, and it was the wish of these ladies that you should be told." "As for discretion," I answered, "I swear that not a single word concerning any of the things I know, whatever they may be, shall pass my lips." "Oh, I know that!" And turning to his wife he kissed her several times, and then kissed Mme Parangon's hand. It appeared that this completed his farewells, for he went out without another word. Manon wept a little. Then a very pretty child was brought in by a nurse, who was feeding it; Manon fondled the infant tenderly, and said to Mme Parangon, pointing to the nurse: "Please put her down at her village, and send everything that the child will need from Sens. A mother asks you to do this, and will thank you."

We departed immediately afterwards, taking the nurse with us, and entered the house by the courtyard of the Cordeliers and our wetting-room door. We left her with Toinette, who knew a great deal more than I did. It was through no lack of trust that I had been kept in ignorance, but because, in the nature of things, a modest woman does not like discussing such matters, and especially with a young man. This child was the legitimate fruit of Gaudet d'Arras's love for Manon; but as they feared difficulties owing to the non-cancellation of Gaudet's vows, its birth had been kept secret. . . .

Next morning I was up at half-past three. I woke Toinette, and she got dressed. The coach left at five o'clock; Toinette went to her mistress, and I held myself in readiness to carry out their orders. Toinette summoned me, and I assisted at the toilet of the fair traveller. . . . Ah, God, how adorable was my Colette in this unfamiliar costume! It became her less perhaps, but her face looked sweetly appealing under the wide bonnet, with its pink and white ribbons which were reflected upon the lilies of her skin. . . . Her husband had offered to get up, but she had excused him, and at once sleep laid downy fingers on his eyelids; he fell back upon the pillow and was asleep when the moment of departure came. I could have sung a hymn of praise to Morpheus for sheer joy, had love left me leisure. . . . We set out accompanied by Jean Lelong, Tourangeot, Bardet, Bourgoin, Loiseau and Toinette. Bourgoin gave one arm to the lovely traveller and carried the bag with her night things under the other; Toinette had the food, Bardet the bottles, Tourangeot the linen, Lelong the dresses; and I carried the parcel for the baby of whom I have spoken, and gave my arm to the nurse. Loiseau carried the nurse's portmanteau and bent beneath the weight of it. Our caravan had crossed the Place Saint-Étienne and was going down the *Rue de l'Évêché,* when we were startled by the shouts of butcher boys running ahead of a mad bullock. Bourgoin, whose mind worked slowly, did not take fright, and was in the narrowest part of the street with Madame Parangon when the bull came into sight. The foreman, without reflecting that he was with a timid and delicate woman, wanted to stop it. I saw what was in his mind and, throwing the child's bundle on the ground, pushed the nurse into an opening between two door-posts; then, as quick as lightning, I lifted Mme Parangon over Bourgoin's arms at the very moment when the ox was lowering its horns to charge her. I threw myself back with her, near to the nurse, and the bull passed. Luckily she was not frightened. "Thank you," she said smiling, "I did not realise he was so savage!" I begged Bourgoin in a whisper not to let her know that it was really a bull. . . . Arrived at the boat we asked for a cabin. The controller, the parcels delivery clerk (who had often sat at M. Parangon's table, as the latter had frequent need of him for despatches), even the director himself examined the accommodation, and gave the key of the most comfortable cabin to the fair traveller. Attentions were so showered upon her that had she waited to speak to me until this moment, she could never have done so. Her only words to me were: "Take plenty of recreation; unlike other men, I am afraid of you shutting yourself up too much. Go to your ballrooms as much as ever you want: the tone of them is bad, and the company not altogether what one would choose for you, but solitude is still more dangerous. I have made Loiseau promise to accompany you. . . . Farewell, my *friend*! . . . We shall be in an altogether more agreeable position when I return. . . . But . . . they are unmooring. . . . Farewell . . ."

We were obliged to leave the boat. I would have liked to go as far as *Regennes*, and come back on foot, as was often enough done; but it would have been no use if anyone else had come too; and Mme Parangon, when I suggested coming alone, pointed out that it might arouse comment. . . . So we parted, and I went home, my mind so full of her that it was midday before I remembered my commemoration of the 14th of July. I kept it during the afternoon with twofold emotion: "Ah," I said to myself, "she was absent when I arrived, she is absent to-day: so far to-day and that day three years ago are alike! Then I was waiting for Colette. . . . Now I weep because she has left me!" During my visit to the Saint-Gervais Arch, I retraced in memory all that had happened to me from the time of Nannette Rameau. Marguerite Pâris, whom I had seen for the last time in this very place, was vividly present to memory; I was astonished at having had no news of her, and suspected that my brothers had intercepted her letters. (I was mistaken. She was alive, and was bringing up our daughter, who was then four and a half.) I thought of Marianne, just married to Louis Boujat, cousin of my maternal step-brother of that name. She had been depressed since her marriage, and I have heard that, although adored by her husband, she still loved me; and this must be attributed less to any personal merit than to the glowing ardour of my ways with simple and inexperienced girls, ways which won their hearts and made them love me. . . . I thought of Jeannette, but as of one who might have been in America and separated from me by an ocean. . . . Manon Prudhôt came in her turn. I never saw her now: she led so retired a life since the attempt to make the rupture between us appear to my disadvantage. . . . Edmée Servigné stirred me deeply when she came before my mind, and I again reflected seriously about a marriage between the sisters and my two cousins. . . . Madelon came last of all; and, in this place where I had so grievously mourned her, her image fused with that of Mme Parangon, who had also departed, and my heart was rent. . . . Then Julie Barbier, Edmée Boissard, Ursule Simon, Marie Fouard, Madelon Piôt, came to distract my mind. I meditated complacently on the number of girls who had loved me and the reflection flattered my vanity. . . . But my scattered thoughts reconcentrated upon Colombe; and my tender sadness in remembering our farewells on just such a day, brought me quickly back again to my lost Colette. I returned home at nightfall.

No one was in to supper that evening except myself, so Toinette and I sat down together: "I have not seen you since dinner," she said. I told her what I had been doing (it was the only confidence of the kind that had so far escaped me); and she was touched by the veneration in which I held all my former friends, and by my deep feeling for our mistress (as we called Madame Parangon between ourselves). "Monsieur Nicolas," she said ingenuously, "I would so like to know if you will remember me like that, a long time, a very long time from now?" I looked at her . . . and it was as though I were transported twenty, thirty, forty years into the future; and was remembering all that was now happening to me; and the memory of Toinette was woven there, fragrant with the charm of things past. . . . My heart grew very tender, and I said: "I shall never forget you. . . . And whenever I remember you, it will be to say *How pretty and lovable and good was Toinette Dominé of Toury*!" Moved in her turn, a tear fell from Toinette's eyes, with a tiny contraction of her features, indicative only of its tender sweetness.

"Ah, then you will never forget me? You will recall me to Madame, and tell her, as I tell you now, that I loved both of you? For I have never known a lad like you, nor a mistress like her!" "Toinette," I answered, "if ever I am a master printer, and print a book for myself which, through its author's merit and its own intrinsic worth, is likely to become famous, I will put at the beginning or the end: *Colette was the most adored of women; she had for friend and maid Toinette Dominé of Toury, the prettiest, most amiable, most excellent of girls, and I, Nicolas-Anne-Edme-Augustin Restif de la Bretonne by Sacy, had the honour of knowing them both. . . .*" "Oh, Monsieur Nicolas, you will put that?" "Yes; master printer or not, I will put it directly I have the chance." "Oh, how pleased I shall be, if I ever read it." "You will read it; you may be as sure of that as if you saw it now." "Oh, and suppose I see it in twenty years?* I think I should burst into tears of joy. . . ." "If I know where you are, you shall see it." [This is an example, Reader, of what I have just said about my pleasant ways with women. There is no kindly action or agreeable phrase I will not use with those who appeal to me.]

After supper Toinette came and sat beside me, and I made her read. She acquitted herself so well, considering the little time she had for study,

*And after forty years (10th of June, 1794) she will see it, and the reading will not please her; for she will also read this note, and learn that her poor master, whom perhaps she thinks is happy, is in the depths of misery, wanting for everything, seeing no issue save in the last resort of the despairing! And her sensitive heart will be torn when she knows all the ills that have assailed him since 1757, the year of this sweet girl's marriage, arranged by her mistress before the latter's death. . . . She has been happy; throughout her life she will have but one bitter moment, and for that I shall be responsible; for it will be when she reads these *Memoirs*! For I am just going to send all that has been printed of them to her at Vermenton, where she has lived for thirty-seven years. I judge of her heart by my own; she will be more sensitive to events long past than in youth; more moved, as she recalls Colette and her goodness, our own friendship, even our lapses. . . . The farther such things are removed in time, the more touching they become.

that I complimented her. Then she confessed that Madame Parangon had been giving her lessons also, and that she had had two masters instead of one. This information enchanted me! I kissed her cheek, and seizing one of her hands held it between mine: Toinette, as the pupil of Mme Parangon, was a hundred times more dear to me. . . . She tried to get up, but I detained her, saying: "Do you not like being near me?" "On the contrary, I like it too well; and . . . I must not make a habit of it. . . ." A tender little smile accompanied this pretty answer. . . . I let her get up, but to keep her with me, for I needed her presence, I suggested a writing lesson. The little rogue, who had been learning this also with Madame Parangon, since I had rather neglected her for some time, smiled slyly, and sent me to fetch paper. She laid it on the table, blank side uppermost, and asked me to set her a *copy*. I took the pen laughing, and wrote, thinking to embarrass her greatly:

Copy for Toinette Dominé

> *To-day the fifteenth of August, the sun set here at five o'clock in the morning. Understand this who can; for I shall say no more.*

She took it; I was smiling. . . . What was my astonishment to see her make a passable copy! When she had finished the word *more*, she said childlike: "Don't watch me; it makes my hand shake." I moved away, even going as far as the street door, whence I could hear people playing hot-cockles in front of Annette Bordeaux's door. I returned to tell Toinette, so that we could join them together. She was quite absorbed in her task and I looked quietly over her shoulder. First came her copy, and then with astonishment I read what she had added:

> *I know wat the ennigma meens; it meens that Madam Parangon left heer today at five oclok in the morning by the bote . . .*

Then she turned round and said, looking at me from under her lashes: "You have been looking! Promise not to. I cannot spell very well, but it is the best I can do." "Go on writing," I told her. "I am going to the door for a moment; only do not let your paper be seen, if anyone should come in." She told me with a gesture to go and play hot-cockles while she went on writing.

Besides Annette and her betrothed Colombat, there were her younger sister and her two brothers; also Rose Lambelin, and Mme Chouin, the pork butcher; Mme Durand, a milliner and a very beautiful woman, and her sister, a pretty girl in service with Mlle de Fouronne, and Julie Degurgis. Chance ordained that, when I joined the game, my palm should light on Rose's hand. I have never felt anything so soft and dimpled; it gave me a thrill. The game did not last long, as the parents of these young people insisted that they should be in by half-past nine. I went home myself, my nerves still vibrating to the touch of Rose's hand. We are already acquainted with this girl from the description I have given of her. Left to myself by Madame Parangon's absence, I was about to slip into one of those inconsequences which must still give rise to astonishment in spite of all that I can say in advance to explain them. . . . But let us turn to Toinette.

She was still writing, but she stopped when I came in, and stood up looking at me. She had written two pages. After the word *bote* she had added:

> *Monsieur Nicola-Anne-Emme-Ogustin-Restif, de Labretonne by Sacy, my master, has shown me how to reed and rite and has promissed that he will put my nam with madams in a buk and his on also in this way: Colait the most adorible of women had for frend and made Toinette Dominé of Toury, most aimiable, and pretiest, and most exellent of girls. And I Nicola-Anne-Emme-Ogustin de Labretonne by Sacy, had the onnor to no them. This will mak me*

> *very happy because I luv him to remember me with madam hom I luv with all my hart, and I like to think that my nam will cum up in the future. And so I luv my master very much because he is going to print my nam in a buk.*

The remainder of the second page was occupied by a repetition of the copy. Toinette stood watching me, surprised that I read it so easily, in spite of the bad spelling.

"But that is splendid, my girl," I exclaimed. "Do you mean to become famous?" "What is that?" "To be well spoken of in the future for your virtues, to be quoted as an example. . . ." "Oh, I would give ten years of my life for that! But it must be for goodness. . . . I would rather die than the other." She was so pretty! And I was young: and at that age even sweet melancholy and tenderest regrets will sometimes react on the senses. I took Toinette on my knees, and she docilely complied. I made to kiss her, and she gave me her cheek. That secret thrill ran through me which wakes desire for possession, and I pressed her to me. . . . I knew how responsive she was and the effect was immediate: sweet Dominé swooned in ecstasy. Then I wanted . . . A noise at the door interrupted me, and I ran to it. It was Tourangeot drunk, and trying to get in. I supported him, and we got him to his closet. This gave me time to reflect, and Toinette also; and she was serious when we returned to the parlour: "What is the matter, Toinette?" "Nothing . . . nothing; but . . . tell me seriously, dear master, why is it that whenever you touch me, I get in a state. . . . I have never felt like it before. It is very pleasant, but it goes to my heart, and I am sad afterwards. . . ." I could not explain exactly, because I did not myself know the nature of the reaction I had seen. I have since realised what happened: this girl loved me far more than she was aware of and, to put it in a word, *emittebat* when I kissed her and pressed her in my arms. However, I told her that it was a proof of her affection for me, and this comforted her. . . . The girls of our district have a healthy prejudice: a girl would think herself dishonoured if a young man put his hand under her skirt; so that Toinette, whom I could have seduced a hundred times but for the necessity of this indecent preliminary, was unapproachable by me, directly that point was reached. . . . Even the excitement I have described, never, at its most intense, undermined the instinctive modesty of the innocent, ingenuous, pure Toinette. When I became too free with her (for once started one returns often to the charge) she would say: "Ah, master! I am no rustic Morvandaise: would you show me such disrespect as to put your hand there . . .?" M. Parangon's return put an end to my amorous perplexities; and once upstairs in my closet, I blushed at myself and for my weakness. Fortunately, in the days that followed, various distractions prevented me from again violating the laws of good faith and hospitality. I made it my business to avoid Toinette, as she was altogether too dangerous for me.

Rose Lambelin was my first distraction. Up to this time I had shown a nice taste in my love affairs: whether in town or in the village, I had always chosen the prettiest girls within reach. Yet here we have Rose Lambelin, plain, hard-looking, and with the beginnings of . . . goitre (it hurts me to write this horrible word); ugly Rose Lambelin, tall, certainly, and perfectly made, and with a skin soft and white as a lily, winning, not my heart or senses, but the admiration of the lover of dainty Fanchette and of the beautiful, the adorable Colette! . . . What could have worked this miracle? Wits, my reader, the wits of a Court schemer, of a Mme de Sévigné. I have said that she looked hard: probably this made her seem all the more amiable when she smiled at me. Yet it was not natural that she should have inspired an attachment which had every mark of passion. She was aware of this, and her behaviour was a masterpiece of subtlety. She had just left the Benedictines, where she had been a boarder. We had become half-acquainted, as has been seen, on the Ile d'Amour; I always saluted her when I passed, and with a certain fervour, for I did not think her dangerous. From time to time I paused for a neighbourly word; and on each such occasion some flash of wit delighted me. I found myself hurrying to join her directly I saw her at her door. She always welcomed me, and her hard features seemed to soften. I enjoyed her company, and always went away pleased with her and with myself. Her plainness made me feel perfectly safe; and once when the thought did occur to me that I might fall in love with her, I soothed myself with the reflection: "*At least I shall have little trouble in falling out again!*" It is my belief one should never play with love: in Paris, neither physically nor emotionally, in the Provinces, not even emotionally. No sooner did Rose notice my eagerness to see her, than she made herself difficult of access. (I had never before encountered coquetry.) On my first movement towards her, when I had caught a glimpse of her, she adroitly disappeared, before I could suspect that she had guessed at my intention. But if I caught her by surprise, or she judged it the moment to await me, then she received me kindly, and talked agreeably. These tactics would infallibly have succeeded, had it not been for two people who infinitely surpassed her and were not coquets! Insensibly I came to like this girl: but it was liking, not passion. At this time I was allowing myself too much dissipation, and I met such a multitude of girls at the ballrooms, and nearly all of them pretty (for the plain are not usually gay), that I was kept in a state of generalised ebullience which precluded any specific attachment. If, at that time, I had known Colombe only, she would have become my wife: but I knew thirty girls, and the impression she made was not strong enough; . . . and as long as I was in this state I took no notice of Rose; it was only towards the middle of 1755 that, struck by her originality and by her wit, which impressed me more every day, I singled her out, first in sheer surprise, then in admiration, and finally with some sort of affection. . . .

Think not, Reader, that, in contending for the one sole love of my life, I am trying to distort or twist my passions as some men twist a text, forcing it, willy-nilly, to serve their purpose. In good faith I have sought out the truth in order to tell it: I have ransacked my heart to the very bottom, scrutinising the springs of action in order to reveal them to you. This is no trifling romance, but a book which cannot help being useful through its veracity, even were that the sole merit I could claim for it. Let other men who read it, examine themselves as have I, and if they are capable of self-analysis they will appreciate it in the light of their own experience. But not every man is capable of such analysis, whether because prejudice blinds him, or because, by nature, he cannot think clearly and deeply enough; or, finally, because he is unconquerably lazy (and this is the case with many!). But to return to Rose.

The phrases of which I make use when speaking of her in my *Memoranda* or Reminders are similar to those of passion. Should any other than myself edit my *Life* from these much abridged *notes*, he would be completely misled, and think this trifling was one of my strongest passions. At the beginning of September, 1754, I simply note: "*His diebus soleo sero loqui cum ingeniosa puella Rosa Lambelin, ad portam Dominæ Chouin, carnicoquæ Parisiensis vicinæ; 6 Septembris.*" This Mme Chouin, a pretty young pork butcher, married in Auxerre, had been a Mlle Londo of Paris, and was as beautiful as her niece of the corner house, *Rue de Bièvre*, whom later both *Pons* of Verdun and I adored. She sponsored my budding affection with enthusiasm, and I can think of no other reason for this than that she was a Parisian. Already, on the 9th of September, my mind was beginning to ferment; for I never used this formula, so often repeated in my note-books: *"Hodie dico: Quid anno sequenti, tali die, sentiam, dicam, aut agam?"* unless impelled by fear or hope or love to take a cast into the future; and that Rose was the sole cause of my perturbation is proved by my note of the 10th: *Ah, what happiness!* . . . *Heri, quam egi dulce juxta puellam Rosam!* . . . This expression *Agere dulce juxta puellam,* also frequently repeated in my note-books, signifies no more than great emotional satisfaction; whereas: *habere dulce puellam* is a decent phrase for the ultimate favour. On the 12th of September, I find: *Ad puellam carissimam Rosam ivi.* (Thus I already call her *my very dear*; I must indeed have had a weakness for quick wit!) And I add: *O felicitatem! Si perdurares!* (O happiness, if you would but last!) Generally speaking the women of this town were not agreeable: without being better behaved than elsewhere, their hardness and uncouth, contemptuous pride repelled any advances; but they by no means lacked intelligence: they had penetration and business capacity, and an even greater capacity for intrigue. It was their vanity to appear, rather than be, rich, witty and modest, industrious, good managers and estimable – favoured, in a word, in every particular. Give them the choice between being supremely happy, adored by their husbands, endowed with plenty of everything, modest and worthy of respect, etc., while appearing to be ill-treated, hated and despised, and the other way about, and they would unhesitatingly have preferred the appearance to the reality. They would sacrifice everything – husband, children, or themselves – to be spoken of to advantage, or to escape contempt. . . . And of all the women in the town, Rose was the most given to think in this manner.

On the 13th of September, I write: *"I have seen little of my dear Rose."* On the 15th I presented some verses I had written for her, and which had been in readiness since the 9th. Rose revived my taste for erotic verse, and I wrote more to her than to any other woman.

The verses in question, wherein I call her Lison, were a medley on the lines of *La Tentation Saint-Antoine*, which had just appeared. Here are a couple of verses:

> *Accept, dear object of my heart's desire, this token of a lover's flame! But though my muse is singing of you in these laudatory lines, she can scarce do justice to the touching thing you did. What charms are offered to my gaze! A throat of alabaster and a breast of lilies! Lison is enchanting when she is dressed, but when she is not, ah, then you would take her for Venus coming to light these desert places, showing to my spellbound eyes the ravishing lady of my love.*

Follows a description of her charms, in my usual manner, and of their surrender, with tenderest phrases on her part and most ardently passionate on mine. This occupies twelve or thirteen verses set to such old airs as *Tircis dessus l'herbette, les Folies d'Espagne, le petit Bois touffu, l'Amour est un enfant, Colinette et Colin.* . . . It would seem incredible that the following verse should occur in a poem intended for Rose, and actually given to her on the 15th of September:

> *Dear Lover, what are you doing? I swoon, I perish! What fire, what unknown pleasure makes me sigh? I am drunken with your sweet clasping, ah, dear lover! end these sweet movements or I cannot live.*

And these detestable, even impertinent verses had a wonderful success with Rose! . . . O folly of youth, whether of one sex or the other, I ought to feel shame for your illusory triumphs!

On seeing me next day, Rose blushed a little for the eroticism I had attributed to her; but she was not offended, for she gave me a little tap on the cheek. This was her second sign of favour, and I assure you, Ladies, that it is one which arouses the greatest hopes. . . .

I saw nothing of Rose from the 16th to the 20th, and mention this in my notes: *"I have not seen my Rose these last days, but Marianne Roullot is very pretty! . . ."* On the 22nd I went to the Place Saint-Étienne to see the firework display celebrating the birth of the *Duc de Berry* (afterwards *Louis XVI*), and had an enchanting little conversation with Rose. In my notes, I exclaim: *Quam heri deliciose mulcebat Rosa! Quam deamo! Love me, dear girl, who adore you!* . . . On the 24th and 25th I note *that I have seen but not talked to her, owing to the presence of her mother, who does not approve of me because she thinks I am a rake* (and truly she did me a great injustice, especially after the party with Tonton Lenclos and her brother, etc.!); and on the 26th *that I was talking to her, when her mother arrived and made her go indoors; but that, as she was going, she trod on my foot to give me to understand how vexed she was, and that her mother did not approve of me.* On the 29th *I complain of my misfortune in not being able to see her whom I love.* . . . Either the mother's injunction was really very strict or Rose was exceedingly clever; for I did not see her again until the 13th of October, and then only had time to give her this very old song:

Love is a tender boy, so shy
You must not fright or chide him;
'Tis freedom that must guide him
The secrets of a heart to spy.
Laughter and Frolic dance in his train

So long as there's nought to scare him;
But he'll fly if you try to snare him,
And ne'er, ne'er, ne'er come back again,
Ne'er, ne'er come back again.

A touch of jealousy, because I had seen her look at handsome Brother Boulanger, the Cordelier, with great attention, made me put this isolated verse into her mouth, and I often sang it myself:

My thoughts were gone a-wandering,
When Timarète with loving sigh
'Gan all his tender passions sing;
I heard, but made him no reply.
I meant not, surely, to offend
This gentle loving shepherd swain.
Where was the cause for him to rend
Four kisses furiously ta'en,
For a light fault . . . so light to mend?

I also enclosed the pretty cantilena quoted in the *Contemporaines.*

But that same day I had an important conversation with the two Baron sisters.

We must know that Manon Baron, noticing that now Madame Parangon was away I often talked to Rose, assumed that I associated with an ugly girl for lack of anything better. She wanted to catch me for herself, because her brother was just as ready to help her as he had been to help Madelon; and for some days she had smiled at me whenever she saw me. On the 13th of October I caught sight of her as I was leaving the house, and her greeting was so cordial that I had in courtesy to pause. "You are very shy these days. You never talk to us now." I answered that I was doing just penance. "No, no, it is not just; because all of us, my step-mother, my sister and I, think very highly of you." "I can believe that of you Mademoiselle, and of Madame, for you are very indulgent." As I said these words, Berdon joined us and greeted me with a smile. She had been listening unknown to Manon, of whose design she was perfectly aware. I responded in like manner. "So you think I do not like you?" "Mademoiselle, as you heard what I said, I can offer no denial; but I should be enchanted to find I was mistaken." "I would not have you remain in error, so I will disabuse you. I have no thoughts about you save kind ones." "Ah, Mademoiselle, what delightful words!" I kissed her hand, and she let it rest in mine. That which is present to the senses has always had a great deal of power over me. I am convinced that, if Manon had not been there, I should have found many tender things to say to the enticing Berdon, one of the prettiest girls in town. But there I was, like *Buridan's* ass, left standing between two equally balanced pleasures; for what Manon lost in figure, she gained in delicacy of feature and the charm of her eyes. Therefore I divided my attentions between Madelon's younger sisters; I held a hand of each and, following the impulse of my feeling at the moment, I said tenderly: "So I have the pleasure of talking to my two sisters! To those of the same blood as one whom I adored and mourn unceasingly! Sweet sisters, may you be as happy as I desire and as you deserve!" "You express yourself most touchingly!" said Manon. "Yes," said Berdon, "I did not know he had so much feeling for us!" "I have, and shall have to the day of my death; for I worshipped your sister as the most amiable and virtuous of her sex." They looked at me with astonishment. For they were bringing up the child which Madelon had borne, when dying of the injury sustained in coming to see me; but as they had never seen me alone in the house with her, they had attributed her pregnancy to Leroi, although Madelon had mentioned no name but mine during her illness. At last Manon said: "How did you know the nature of her illness?" "Through some one of your sex, and only a short time ago." (It was Toinette, who had heard it from Marot, the Dlles Baron's maid.) "And . . . you thought no evil of her? . . ." "I! Just Heaven! . . . Ah, if I dared to say to her sisters what I say to myself! . . ." "You can," said Berdon. "Very well, I will. If at the time I had known the real cause of dear Madelon's death I should never have survived her." (And I told them of my anguish at Saint-Gervais behind the City on the 14th of August. . . . They shuddered! . . .) I added: "I was the father. . . . On the 20th of January . . . and long before . . ." (I told them everything that had happened, seeing that it was necessary to clear their sister of all suspicion of deceit, and repeated all our subsequent conversations, and especially the last one). . . . The two sisters began to weep bitterly, saying to each other: "Ah, God, she was innocent, and we prevented her from seeing him! . . ." Manon went in search of her step-mother, who was in the upstairs room, and took a little time to tell her what had passed. . . . And this moment would have united Berdon and myself for ever, had it not been for Mlle Fanchette; for our hearts went out to each other as we stood with clasped hands. . . . Mme Baron came down, her eyes wet with tears, and kissed my hand: "Dear friend, you have restored my daughter's innocence, and I believed her false to a degree. . . . O God, forgive me for having kept her husband from her in her last moments. He must have his legacy," she added. "With all our hearts," answered the sisters. But when they had explained what it was, I refused it, and asked only for something that had belonged to her. They took me to her room, which I could not look upon again without tears. . . . They spread out all that remained of hers, and I took the pair of shoes which she had worn on the 20th of

January. They were pink with green heels, and I keep them still with Madame Parangon's, which are smaller although she was the taller of the two. Such relics of women who were dear to me, and whose names I still adore, are really holy things! . . . Berdon and Manon were touched by my disinterestedness and the veneration I showed for their sister's memory, and said to me (it was Berdon who spoke): "When Madelon was dying she recommended me to receive your addresses; and, in my default, she gave the same advice to Manon. I admit that I was disposed to receive them, and that I was vexed by your indifference; but now I approve your conduct: you were right to withdraw. We shall never be more than sisters to you, but we shall always respect you. . . . And now, as your sisters, we want to ask you something: what are your plans with regard to marriage?" "And I will answer as your brother, Mesdemoiselles: Madame Parangon's father has taken my affairs in hand, and has communicated his plans to my father." "Ah, that is very suitable! But what are you about with Rose then?" "I am following the advice of a reliable person, and escaping from myself and from solitude. Your estimable sister gave me the same advice more than once, for we used to have serious conversations, although they were short and usually by stealth. . . . Rose is intelligent; but she is ugly and there is no risk of my growing fond of her: that must be avoided, and I shall keep myself detached. Although I am still young, I have suffered cruel losses, and solitude is grievous to me!" "He is right, sister," said Manon. "Yes, yes, sister, he is right. . . . Dear God, if only people talked frankly together and understood each other, there would be fewer rash judgments! . . ." "Ah, and if one could see into the future," I answered, "I might now follow the promptings of my heart." It was time to go indoors, so I bowed to the sisters and their step-mother and withdrew.

In a note of the 16th of October I take counsel with myself: "I must take stock of the state of my affections. I adore Mlle Fanchette; I would rather have her than anyone in the world, excepting her sister. I want very much to marry Edmée and Catherine to my two cousins. Pretty Manon Léger gave me an exquisite sensation yesterday, but I must not see her again. The eldest sister of my friend Dhall is charming! But she deserves complete devotion. The younger is like Mlle Fanchette and the same age. I have no expectations now with Berdon or Manon Baron. So much the better! They are very attractive, and they upset me. But it seems to me that it would be very pleasant to make Rose fall in love with me. I must think about this. . . . As for Toinette, that girl . . why the devil did fate make her a servant? She is beautiful as a princess, and as virtuous as Madame Parangon. . . . Ah, if only she were Mlle Fanchette, how I could love her! *N.B.* I must keep out of her way; avoid being alone with her, on account of the Devil and his temptations. . . . As for Madame Parangon. . . . (Here there is a large gap, and at the end these Latin words in Greek characters: *In albis socculis fallor. . . .** Perhaps they will be understood.)"

On the 20th I must confess I was as one dead. I saw nothing of Rose; but I found consolation with her little friend Julie, Burat's mistress, and with Mlle Douy, mistress at that time of my friend Baras-Dallis, and I must admit that I loved the latter more than ever. But I loved none but you, O Colette! Colette was possessed of my heart and senses! I forced myself to put Fanchette in her place, but she could not fill my heart; there was a void which I strove to fill with all those who most appealed to me! I wanted to stop loving Colette; but her soul was one with mine and its very

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*There is no difficulty in understanding that he means he had masturbated with the help of Madame Parangon's slippers. [*Ed.*]

essence; I could no more separate it from myself than I could my own. Other women were but mirrors reflecting her image; and I, like the deluded lark, let myself be caught, only to realise my mistake afterwards. When I was moved by a young girl, it was Colette who excited me, though I thought I loved these vain images of her beauty; and the instability of my affections at this time is proof of what I say.

On the 26th, I was considerably attracted by Mlle Dhall, sister of the Dhall who, with Baras-Dallis, had brought me back that evening when I had swooned from anguish. I composed a little romance of happiness, with her for heroine; I did more, I wrote it out, and gave it to her, saying: "If you would like to know, Mademoiselle, how a man could find happiness with you, you must read this." I had printed the title:

TO MADEMOISELLE AGLAÉ-FERDINANDE DHALL
HAPPINESS!

By Nic.-Ann.-Edm.-Aug. Restif.

The rest was in manuscript. "*I was imagining wherein I might find happiness. I looked about me, and my eyes lighted on sweet Ferdinande, the charming sister of my dearest friend.*" (I will not quote more of this romance; it describes minutely my way of loving in the spring-time of my life.)

I withdrew directly the note-book was safely in her hands. I have never spoken to her since; but whenever she saw me after, she always blushed. The sweet Gremmerey was her greatest friend, and one day I had the pleasure of seeing them reading my note-book together. . . . Aglaé-Ferdinande, though tall, was slightly made, and more like Zéphire than any I have ever known, even including Émilie Laloge; she had the same slim waist and vivid colour; the same smile. Her younger sister was of still slighter build, and was so exactly the figure of my Zéphire that, when first I saw the latter, my heart came into my mouth, thinking it was Séraphine Dhall in an evil quarter! . . .

My fancy for the beautiful Ferdinande was checked by a letter from Madame Parangon on the 1st of November, which completely occupied my mind. Toinette knew that a letter to me from her mistress was due on that day, and was on the look-out for the postman. It was addressed to her. She brought it up to the printing-room at once, and I went into my closet to read it. I have not got this letter, as I was instructed to burn it; but this was the sense of it: "*I must tell you, my dear Toinette, that I am now staying with my sister-in-law; that is to say, I have a small apartment on the same floor as her own and very convenient; Fanchette's room is next door to mine. She was overjoyed to see me again. I wrote to my father directly I arrived, and have had a most satisfactory answer, in which he says that, after six months in Paris, he will keep Fanchette at home to look after the house, and will tell everyone that he has definitely chosen a husband for his youngest daughter, so that no one asks for her hand. He adds that he wants to make a good housewife of her, so as to have a suitable gift to offer the young man he has in view. For my part, I exert all my influence in favour of her intended and he may rely absolutely upon me. I shall stay here until the end of the year at least and my father has written to my brother that I am to be left completely free to do what I like; adding that he is partly in my confidence. This kindness is very dear to me! Give my greetings to Monsieur Nicolas, Monsieur Bourgoin, and Monsieur Loiseau. Tell them that I have sent you a line, but do not show them the letter: burn it, lest it should fall into other hands. I do not want anyone else to read what I have told you. Farewell, child, and keep well; take good care of the house and of yourself, and follow the advice of prudent persons, you know whom. Your friend Colette C***.*"

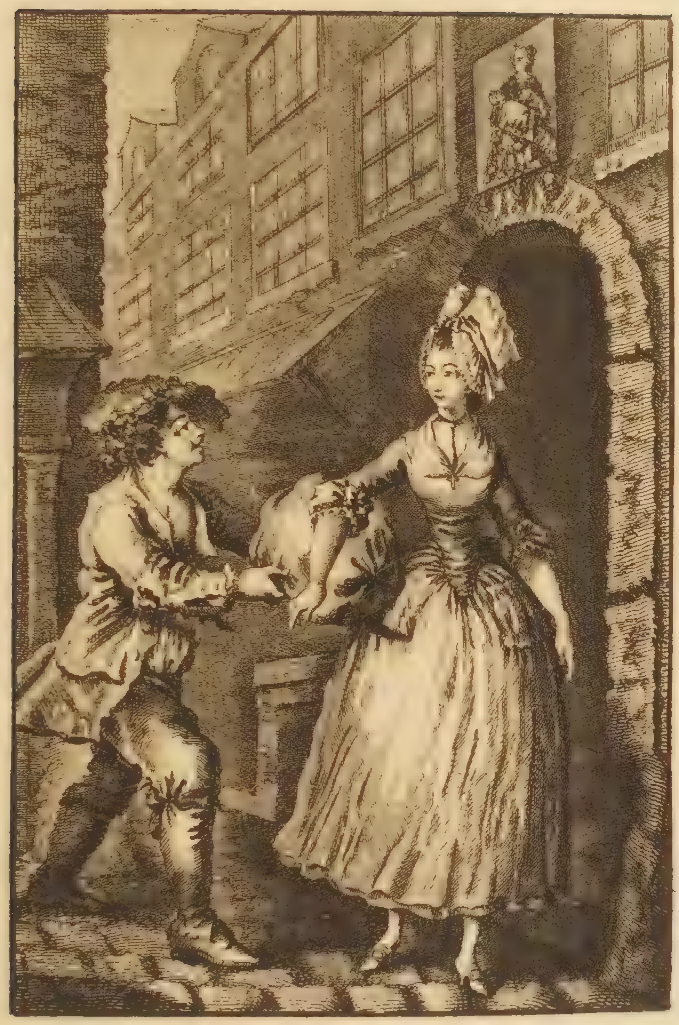
The letter was entirely for me: the messages were only a matter of form, in case of accident, and I was not to deliver them, nor was Toinette to know the contents of the letter. Such were the instructions contained in a sealed note, to be delivered to me with her first letter, which Madame Parangon had given Toinette as she was leaving, together with the date on which this letter would arrive. I was deeply touched by the kindness of my goddess (for so I always called her in my thoughts). This proof of her interest in me sustained me for several days, and gave me strength to think no more of Rose or Ferdinande.

Such was my state of mind when on the 11th of November I saw . . . Jeannette Rousseau pass our door! She was with her mother and her brother. I did not dare to speak to them. I had quite lost my old-time bashfulness with others, but with them I was back again in Courgis: blushes covered my face, my heart beat painfully and I was overwhelmed with the old shy diffidence; I had not the strength to go out. Jeannette did not see me, and I dared not look her full in the face; I had seen her for the last time! . . . When she had passed, I took myself to task for not having greeted three people who interested me so closely. I went out to run after them; but I had taken too long to recover myself, and could not see them anywhere. . . . I stood there, stupefied and motionless. For ten minutes I was the simpleton of Courgis; my mind worked in the same way; I had gone back four years. Then little Luce Picard, a pretty young orphan who sometimes came to sew for Madame Parangon, happened to pass; she greeted me, and stopped to ask if Madame Parangon was coming back soon. Her question roused me from my dream, and I answered that, as far as I knew, we should not see Madame Parangon until the end of the year. "But," I added, "Toinette will be very pleased to see you; do call in as you go by." I wanted to get rid of her as quickly as possible, and see if I could not discover Jeannette. I went down the *Rue de la Fricauderie*, and, opposite the *Rue des Boucheries*, met Gaudet, who was coming back from the *Porte-du-Pont.* "I have just passed the prettiest peasant you could imagine!" he said. "Ah, how charming she was!" "How was she dressed?" "In a little violet-blue bunting jacket, a striped red and white skirt, and the cap of a village young lady, with a pretty wide frill of tiny, tiny pleats. Oh, but pretty!" "That's Jeannette Rousseau!" I cried involuntarily. "Where is she?" "I do not know; but the girl I am talking about should be somewhere near Saint-Gervais by now. But if that is Jeannette Rousseau, Mademoiselle Rousseau is a very pretty girl! Where does she come from?" Jealousy (yes, I was jealous) prevented me from mentioning Courgis, and Gaudet did not press me.

On my return home, I ſound Luce Picard and Toinette chatting together in all the innocence of their pure hearts and with that sweet artlessness which nowadays brings tender tears to my eyes when I chance to come across it. I told them that I was going to work and, as there was no one in the shop, asked them to ring for me if a customer came in. "Stay with us," said Toinette, "we will not talk loud, and will leave you plenty of room to write." I was always willing to oblige a pretty girl, so I remained. But after a moment, I said: "You disturb me, my chicks; you talk and you laugh, and worst of all you are pretty, and that distracts me." They put the screen round me, laughing; and, so that I should not block the passage way, tucked me away in the chimney corner. I had been writing for about a quarter of an hour, when some one came in. "Oh!" cried Luce, "if that is M. Parangon, I do not want him to find me here." And she ran behind the screen, and crouched on a little stool at my feet. It was Tourangeot.

"At last I find you alone!" he said to Toinette. "Come now; we're going to fight it out!" "Leave me alone, Monsieur Tourangeot, or I swear you'll come off badly, and Madame shall hear of it." "I respect Madame, and when she is here I am afraid of her. But she is a long way off, you see, pretty Toinette, and I am not in the least afraid of people who are not here, men or women! Whereas I adore pretty girls who are here, such as you, little rogue. . . ." As he finished speaking, he seized Toinette, and threw her on to M. Parangon's bed. She hit him with all her strength. *"The kicks of the mare do no harm to the stallion,"* he said. . . . And his insolence increased. Luce suffered for her friend, and opening the screen a crack, she stuck a needle into that fleshy region whereon a schoolboy expiates his sins. Tourangeot uttered a cry, accompanied by an oath. He caught sight of young Luce: "Ah, so it's you, you little bitch! You'll pay for that." He let go Toinette, caught the flying Luce by her skirt, and, as she was slight, lifted her up like a feather. The child cried for help; for the Tartar was by no means in jest.* Toinette ran to her assistance, but, in fending her off,

*The following incident happened when I was working at the shop in the *Cour du Palais* with Edme and Tourangeot: it was in the early times of my apprenticeship. One Saturday evening, when Edme was at one of the first Vespers of the Convulsionary sect, the servant of Mme Chouin, the pork butcher, happened to pass. Tourangeot called her, and the simple girl came upstairs, thinking that she was going to see how books were made. I was at the far end of another room surrounded by paper. The Tartar upset her on to the refuse paper and vanquished her in spite of her opposition. . . . I could not hear much, and thought it was just a game. Getting worried at last, I went to fetch Edme from his ill-famed meeting place, the house of la Bardin, Rue de la Marinerie. . . . He hurried upstairs and found the Tartar still savagely intent upon his prey. "My daughter!" exclaimed the devout man, falling on his knees. "Invoke the most Blessed Deacon Pâris, and the beguiling Serpent will lose all his strength. Utter an ejaculatory prayer!" At the same time he caught Tourangeot in the small of the back with his heavy and most helpful stick. The Tartar stood up with a fearful oath: "Luckily I was at my third basting," he said. . . . The girl was so exhausted that Edme had to help her downstairs, adjuring her the whole way to commend herself to the Blessed Pâris, so as not to become pregnant. . . . Yet after all was not this Tartar less brutal than myself?



Tourangeot managed to handle her so obscenely that she was obliged to have recourse to me. I had suspected what would happen from the moment the Tartar came in, and had put the tongs in the fire. I gave them to Toinette, and she ran at Tourangeot with them; he seized hold of them and burned himself so badly that he was obliged to let go of Luce, who fled at once into the street. Toinette locked herself up in the kitchen, carefully taking the key out of the lock. It must be admitted that Tourangeot had been drinking. Finding himself alone, he pulled aside the screen and was astonished to find me writing as tranquilly as though I had heard nothing. "What the devil are you doing here?" "And what the devil were you doing with those girls, making such a terrific noise that I can't hear myself think?" Instead of answering, he took my ink-horn, and poured the ink on his burn, swearing that he would pay out both Toinette and Luce. Then I told him that I had overheard everything, and was amazed that he should carry things so far with a girl who lived in the house, and who for that reason alone should be respected. "Is it disrespectful to want to . . . her?" I was embarrassed by his brazen impudence. It was necessary to speak plainly to this shameless person. "But suppose you gave her a child?" "I would marry her." "But if she does not love you?" "That's just the point: if she loved me, I should only have to do what is necessary to give her a child to have her." "And what about Marie?" "Marie? You're right; but I have never given her one; and it would be more important to legitimise the one I had begotten myself, than Marie's, which is excellently legitimised already. Hum! . . . Still you have made me remember Marie, and drink made me forget her. Who sees nothing, says nothing. (A borrowed phrase of Tourangeot's.) I will run along to her if you don't mind keeping shop?" "I don't mind at all; run along and leave me to work."

He left at once and Luce, who had taken refuge with Marianne, the Cuisin's maid, came back again. She called Toinette, and they consulted me as to how they should make their complaint to M. Parangon. "The person who keeps order here and sees that everyone behaves decently is away," I answered, "so put that idea right out of your head! I warn you that if you complain, either of you, it is a fox who will confess you, and he will eat you up. . . . If you do not believe me, let one of you try it, taking the precaution to have the other within call." I just had time to say these words, when some one else came in. The two girls were still frightened, so Luce came behind the screen and sat at my feet, and Toinette fled into the kitchen. It was M. Parangon.

Toinette was obliged to come back: "You are staying, Monsieur?" "No, no," he answered, with a touch of the rake in his voice. "You get prettier every day, Toinette!" "Oh, Monsieur, you say that out of kindness." "It is true, and I like saying it. . . . Yes, yes, I like saying it." And he took her upon his knees. I was afraid that a new scene was going to begin, and that M. Parangon would never forgive me for remaining hidden like a spy; so I coughed. He jumped: "Who is that?" "It is Monsieur Nicolas, who was looking after the shop while I was in the kitchen." M. Parangon pulled aside the screen so that he could see me. Luce slipped behind my chair, and crouched down. I did not even raise my eyes, but, pen in mouth, pretended to be looking for a word in the dictionary. At last I looked up and bowed, saying: "Monsieur, I did not see you. . . . Can I do anything for you?" "No, no; but you seem as absorbed as Archimedes." "Monsieur, I hear nothing when I am at work; I have very little time, as you know, and I take full advantage of what I have." "Quite right, quite right! . . . I am going out . . . Toinette, I shall have supper in the town." "Yes, Monsieur."

He moved away, but he was a very big man and had already disarranged the screen, and it overturned completely while he was trying to get his hand inside Toinette's neckerchief, as she was opening the baize door for him, and with such a crash that Luce screamed. "Who the devil is that? . . . Ah, it is Luce! . . . What are you doing there, Luce?" I answered for her and explained that, hearing some one come in, she had hidden herself there because she thought it was Tourangeot, who had only just gone out, and was afraid of his horse-play. "So she took refuge with you?" "Yes, Monsieur." "Pay attention to me, Luce: Tourangeot barks, that man says nothing, but he bites." He went out after this witticism, leaving all three of us very much relieved that he was not annoyed. . . . "Oh, I shall take good care to make no complaints to him!" said Toinette. "Supposing you hadn't coughed. . . . Oh, he is a. . . . I cannot say that word of Madame's husband and my own master."

We kept Luce to supper, a little liberty of which M. and Mme Parangon approved: even when they were unacquainted with them, we could always ask our friends to stay when they were out, and still more so when it was some one who worked for them. Tourangeot came in again at eight o'clock; but as Loiseau and Bardet came in at the same time, the girls were safe. After supper we played *Curé*, and during the game, Loiseau demonstrated how a witty man can make the slightest thing entertaining. . . . When it was time for Luce to go home, she took my arm, and begged me not to leave her to anyone else. (In passing, I may remark that it was such marks of esteem as this that preserved my virtue for a long time.) I said to Toinette in Loiseau's presence: "There has been a supper in town and a very gay one, so keep Luce with you, and she can go back to-morrow." This advice pleased Toinette, and Luce too. The rest of us went to bed, while they sat up for M. Parangon, who never came in till late. He came back extremely merry. . . . But, as Luce was with Toinette, he restrained himself, and the two girls left the room together. Soon, however, the bell rang for Toinette. She was not in a condition to go herself, so Luce answered it. M. Parangon asked for something, and she gave it to him, in the dark and without speaking. But it had only been an excuse to keep her. "Dear Toinette," he said, "I love you with all my heart. Do not worry about consequences; I will provide for you." "Ah, Monsieur," said Luce, "have pity on me!" "Why, is it you, Luce?" said he, playfully. "Yes, Monsieur." "Ah, my child, how grieved I am! Heaven keep me from assaulting a poor orphan forced to work by the day! To seduce her would be to ruin her. . . . Always be good, my child, and forget the bad example I have just set you. Now go to bed; and, even if I ring, I forbid you to come, or Toinette either; it is the fumes of the wine." It pleases me to tell things to the credit of M. Parangon when occasion offers. Thus passed Saint-Martin's day.

On the 17th of November I had a pleasant time with little Julie Degurgis, who was very easy to get on with and would certainly have been ruined if she had met anyone who wanted to seduce her. For she was in love with an intolerable young man, who after having melted her heart, allowed her to meet other men much more amiable than himself (and this perhaps is one of the chief causes of prostitution). I made her a present of a box shaped like a snuff-box; though she did not use that villainous stuff which detracts so much from a woman's charm. Her lover Burat, the surgeon and one of my friends, could talk of nothing else but her, and she talked of nothing else but him; yet they quarrelled every evening, and made it up every morning! . . . We were walking on the path by the river, Julie and I, when Burat met us: he was by nature jealous, and was amazed to see me with his mistress. . . . "There's Burat," I said to Julie: "I will leave you with him, and do as I would be done by if I met . . ." "Who?" she interrupted laughing, "Rose?" "Yes, . . . Rose. . . ." Then I said to Burat: "She can talk of nothing but you; no doubt she would prefer to speak to you yourself. . . . I will leave you together." "No, stay," he answered, "for directly we are alone, we shall begin to quarrel." "But why? It must be your fault; because Mlle Julie is sweet-natured. You must tease her." "Do you think so, my friend?" "I am perfectly certain of it. She is gentle, sweet-tempered and affectionate; and she loves you." "Well stay and listen for a moment." The conversation began with reproaches. Julie's were merited; Burat answered with recriminations, but there was little foundation for anything he said. I was listening four paces away. "Well," he said, "I appoint you our judge." "I am ashamed of you," I answered. "Mademoiselle has reason for her complaints and a real grievance against you; your defence is merely idle." "Truly?" "On my honour!" "Then I am a wretch!" "You certainly don't deserve your luck." Burat threw himself into my arms. "You are the only real friend I have! You are the first to open my eyes. The other day Julie and I had a quarrel in front of Colombat, and, after we had parted, he said that the fault was not on my side. . . . My friend, if he had been as strong as I, I should have thrashed him. . . . Oh, you're an intelligent man and a good friend! You see that I'm in the wrong; and that I should be desperate if I really had anything against her." He had tears in his eyes. "Well," I said to Julie, "what have you to say? Do you love him?" "Prove to her that I love her, and I will never forget it, dear Nicolas. Some day I will tell her children, which will be mine too, that they owe their father and mother to my friend, Monsieur Nicolas of Sacy."

"Goodbye, goodbye," I cried, and escaped. I went and shut myself up to dream of my mistress, whom I called Fanchette, but who was her eldest sister. . . .

As I was lost in dreams about one for whom my heart betrayed my reason it occurred to me to write to an Avignonnaise called Mlle Potamon. She was the beauty of the district, and Clizot and Gonnet, her compatriots, spoke rapturously of her. I did not know her and she did not know me: what matter? Does one reflect at twenty, or consider difficulties or conventions? I wrote my amorous epistle that evening and put it in the post next morning.

Nothing worth noting happened until the end of the year. I was still fond of Rose, but so conveniently that, on the 13th of December, I was able to feel an inclination to devote myself to Manon Baron; because she was a pleasant girl and wished me well, and because it amused me to overcome her scruples (already mentioned). I made the attempt and would, in all probability, have succeeded, had I been free and my attack been serious. . . . Is this conduct surprising in a man sure of fair Fanchette's hand and almost sure of her heart also? It was just this that made me enterprising. I had all the boldness of one who runs no risks, combined with the restlessness of an idle heart with nothing to do to keep its mistress's affection.

About the same time it came into my head to write my epitaph, after twenty years of life, that is to say, before I had lived at all. This idea has never come to me again, so the epitaph must stand; and my character has hardly changed since then. Note only that what I say of women in general is only true of secondary passions.*

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*Compare this with the poem on p. 1220 of *Drame de la Vie*, in which the delicate exception made in Madame Parangon's favour will be observed. These lines are harsh and uneven, but I

Here lies an amorous mortal's heart, whose worship every Fair could win to her, but to whom not One of all, by a fatal chance, could give felicity. Unstable in his devotions and improvident, he desired a good beyond his reach. No beauty could strike the spark twice that lit his unfaithful flame; his heart was hot in the assault, cold in retreat, yea, and no sooner taken than it was his again, and given anew with prompt inconstancy to some fresh Fair who tipped the scale of it. Yet if once he left his Beauty, though still loving her – once might be pardoned – he never went back to her again. One woman, alas, and she the fairest, could have kept his love, had she returned it! . . . For the rest, if his courtship was challenged by a rival and his flame fanned by varying fortune, his boldness grew; he wanted the position of conqueror, and took it with his burning ardour, and triumphed through a fire which flashed and died. His friends were never wearied or a fair girl cooled by indifferent talk from him, or pointless sparkling: his burning caresses fired any woman who yielded to them in his Springtide, and though she escaped the amorous hand that held her, she was drunken with love. . . . Since he was such, respect, O you who pass, the faults of the poor dead.

On the 24th of December, Christmas Eve, hearing that Mme Parangon was not coming back yet, I left for Sacy, and stayed there until the 27th. It was on my return from thence that I betrayed my principles with regard to Toinette. . . . I was coming from my father's house, it is true; but for seven leagues, covered briskly on foot, my mind had pastured on amorous fantasies, and I arrived drunk with that sensuality which the open air engenders in anyone strong and of a good constitution. Toinette received me as a brother; and I met her as a sister. I warmed myself beside her, after she had given me some sweetened wine, to unfreeze my breath as she put it. A secret fire ran through my veins, and I kissed her. It was four days since

am still astonished by their truth! Young friends, keep a note of all you do in youth! Looking through my diaries for the poem you have just read, I find my records from the *1st of August to the end of December, 1754*, and they deliciously recall the times when they were written; I am back in them, I feel them, and forty years are wiped out! It is an ecstasy that lasts but a few minutes, but it slakes the heart's thirst for some hours with a magic and intoxicating nectar.

we had met, and she offered no opposition. But soon I grew more ardent, and all the more dangerous for the fact that I made no effort to hold her as on other occasions. She was quite unsuspicious. My desire grew ravaging. . . . She got up. I watched my chance, and tripped her up: she lost her balance, and would have fallen had I not caught her. I used my advantage. . . . Toinette, as we know, was not proof against this kind of attack. Resolved to triumph, I completed her intoxication by glueing my lips to her scarlet mouth. . . . She heaved a profound sigh, and abandoned herself to me. . . . There was no violence; she offered no defence . . . Almighty God! With what ineffable delights you have encompassed the reproduction of our kind! . . . Toinette was plunged in voluptuous ecstasy! . . . The narrow gates of the temple, anointed with pleasure's easing balm, yielded with virginal reluctance, but they yielded the more deliciously for that. . . . At last the lightning of happiness flashed and was gone, leaving nothing but the black clouds of remorse in all their fearful gloom. . . . Toinette had been so intensely moved that, as she came to herself, a provocative languor still lingered about her face and in her eyes, and maddened me afresh. . . . Toinette, suppliant and distracted, yielded instead of struggling, and with all the vigour of a strong, well-made girl of twenty-two, mingling deep sighs with inarticulate cries. She stiffened, clasped me in her arms, and was lost to the world. . . . At last little broken tender words escaped her. . . . The bell rang, and she ran to answer it, the more quickly for that she was trembling at having so narrowly escaped discovery.

In her absence I had time for reflection. Madame Parangon and Fanchette came first to mind. Then the wrong done to Toinette, my friend and pupil, and to her who had entrusted the girl to me. . . . At this moment she re-entered. I gazed at her, holding her hand in mine. Tears were flowing from under her lowered lids, but at last she raised her lovely eyes to mine, and said: "We have mortally offended against God! But . . . had it not been a sin . . . ah, how willingly would I have given you . . . this flower, as it is called . . . and it will always be some comfort to me that it was plucked by the only man I love in all the world." Then she left me to serve the supper.

When the meal was over, I hoped that, by showing the deep respect I felt for her, I might comfort her a little. Everyone went out, even Bardet, and we were left alone. I took Toinette upon my knees; and kissed her, saying: "I love you with all my heart, dear girl; can you forgive me?" "Oh, yes, I have already done so; I can't blame you any more than myself. . . ." I kissed her again and would have gone further, had not Toinette said: "Think, you would be ruined if anyone chanced to come in!" "And what about yourself, my child?" "I don't mind about myself." "Ah, Toinette, I have made you mine, and it was one of the happiest moments of my life! I have possessed you, sweet girl, and tasted a pleasure unknown to potentates! You are perfect, so do not expect me just now to do without you. You are too exquisite!" "I yielded because I felt I must . . ." she answered, "or leave you . . . in a sort of frenzy. . . . For you really were . . . oh, in a terrifying state. . . . I yielded because I could no longer control myself. . . . One can't help wanting to know what it is like; now I know. I did not think I should know before my marriage. I should die of grief if it were anyone but you. . . . Everything in me betrayed me to do what you wanted. . . . I could never refuse you anything; but what shall we say to Madame Parangon? . . . Never mind!" she continued, seeing that I was about to speak, "I know that you have a good heart and will blame yourself much more than ever I could, and that you will always say what you should. If you go astray, it is only because you have a man's passions and they make you do things you disapprove of. So I am not cross with you. But please, please, don't let us be really bad and conscienceless, and give ourselves over to debauchery! Let us respect our bodies, and if we fall again, let it be because we can't help it, and never deliberately." (Such was Toinette's argument; and what would have been a mockery from a heroine of the younger Crébillon, from her was simply and touchingly sincere. . . .) "You are tired; go and rest, and leave me to wait up alone." "No, since this evening I have grown jealous, I cannot leave you alone when a Tourangeot might come in; you are upset, and might succumb to him. . . ." She stared at me, and then rising said: "Take my weakness for you out of my heart, if you can, and then see whether I succumb. . . . Oh, you are ungrateful. Do you think I have never been assaulted by M. Parangon, by M. Bourgoin, by Tourangeot, and by several of the workmen? They did not even manage to kiss me! I threw them off like children. I was angry, and when I had finished with them they had not the face to try again, for very shame at being such weaklings. Can't you see how tall I am, and strong? There," she added, lowering her eyes, "there is only one thing I want, and the good God knows what it is. I know to whom you belong, and when I gave myself, I did not expect what I would anyway have refused, that is . . . unless everything else failed you, and I could be of use. . . . But if I could have what I want, I would cherish it and watch over it and love it . . . as long as my heart beats. . . . Go to bed, please!" I got up, saying: "You have convinced me. . . . Goodnight, my Toinette, my dearest girl; just one kiss?" She kissed me modestly, as a sister might, and I left the room.

I had reached the middle of the courtyard, when some one else came in.

Through curiosity, I hid in the kitchen to hear and see what would happen. It was Bourgoin. "Ah, Toinette! Alone? . . . But what is the matter? Are you in trouble? . . ." "Yes, Monsieur." "May I comfort you?" "Neither you nor anyone else can do anything." He tried to kiss her, and then I saw how truly she had spoken, for she threw him full length on to two chairs, saying: "In God's name, leave me alone, Monsieur Bourgoin!" "Always the same; always cantankerous!" he said. "But you are a good girl, and you are right." and he went up to bed. Tourangeot followed, and chucked her under the chin. Toinette boxed his ears. "Bitch!" he exclaimed; "you shall pay for that!" He threw himself upon her, but Toinette got rid of him and had him outside the parlour in a trice. He was trying to get in again when M. Parangon arrived, and the Tartar fled. But it meant a third encounter for Toinette. He began by moving the screen. "I was just looking to see if Monsieur Nicolas and Luce were still hidden here," he said. . . . "I hope you are strict with that young jackanapes, Toinette; he's a hypocrite! . . ." "He is not devout, Monsieur. . . ." "He cants about kindness and virtue and being disinterested with the girls, and eats them up ten times worse than anyone else. . . . Well, Toinette, what about it, my girl? . . . You know I would find you a husband? Don't worry about anything of that sort; you are a pretty girl, and I know what you are worth. . . . I will promise to look after you well, keep your secret, and find you a husband. . . . I will pay your little household expenses, and find a place for your husband in my printing works." As he finished speaking, he caught hold of her. "Don't blame anyone but yourself if I hurt you," exclaimed Toinette. However, he persisted, so she threw him over, chair and all; but she kept hold of him, as he was so fat that he might have been killed. "You really won't have anything to do with me?" he asked. "Never, Monsieur." "Then we won't say any more about it. I don't like you any the better for it, but I respect you more. . . . If you really want to be virtuous, then be it. But if I ever hear that another . . . I will never forgive you . . . save on condition . . ." "Monsieur, if I were so unhappy as . . . to fall, and so vile as to become a . . . I know not what, you would not let me stay two days with Madame." "Ah, that all depends. . . ."

As Toinette had finished her work, M. Parangon went to bed, and she carried away the lights. I was waiting for her. "What, are you still here?" "Yes, I saw everything . . . Toinette, ah, Toinette! You are a treasure to a poor wretch who is not worthy of you. . . . But, dear girl, I am on fire . . . I want to sleep with you . . . I want . . . to give you proof of my love. . . ." "Never, even with you, will I be guilty of premeditated sin, or of acquiescing in cold blood," she said firmly. "Never will I make arrangements to put myself into your arms. Never will I voluntarily expose myself or you to being regarded as without remorse for our sin and at peace with ourselves should we be caught together. . . . I have fallen; perhaps I shall fall again; but only in spite of myself, never *deliberately*. Have some respect for yourself, dear master, and do not turn your Toinette into a bad woman, who would then make you bad too! . . . There, there – if you force me to fail in goodness, at least never do it with premeditation." (Note, Reader, that I only give the sense of Toinette's words; but I use her own phrases whenever I can remember them.) . . . Her expression, her manner, everything about her dominated my passion. "Goodnight, Toinette," I said. "Something tells me that you are right." [From this point of view Toinette was unique: she had yielded to an impulsion of the senses rather than to my violence, and yet was not contaminated. She did not feel dishonoured or degraded by a natural weakness; but the idea of premeditated consent repelled her, although she wanted to have a child! . . . It was thus with Colette. . . . After an act which she would never have suffered if she could have prevented it, she was as virtuous as before, she never fretted about it, nor was ashamed nor weaker. . . . Maids and wives! Learn from these two examples of what you are capable, if you are truly good and pure at heart.]

I went to bed, and tired out with exercise and pleasure, fell into a deep sleep. I was busy at work next day, but cruel remorse tormented me all the same. Memory showed me painfully how vile I was. To whom did I owe what remained to me of virtue, honour and decency? To Toinette. If she had consented to have me in her bed, I should have become a crapulous libertine. I have said it before: I owe everything to women. Men have vicious instincts and, as they cannot stifle them, say women are the cause. But woman is the cause of virtue, vice belongs to us! My conduct proves it. . . . In the grip of remorse, I reflected: "And I despise Monsieur Parangon! I have even dared to excuse and justify my outrage on Colette by his conduct! . . . And suppose, miserable wretch, some one avenged that modesty you have so often outraged upon your wife?"

I blushed when I saw Toinette, and, according to my custom, was more considerate to her, more restrained, even, one might say, respectful; my behaviour quite restored her good opinion of me, which had doubtless suffered from my hardihood.

On the 31st of December, I was distracted alike from desire and remorse. The aunt of Mlle Potamon, the famous beauty of Avignon, answered my letter. She supposed *"that I had seen her niece's portrait, some painter's theft"* (so she said). I was much entertained by this light-hearted adventure for a few days. It had no sequel; but it had been my whim to have an answer from this Fair, nothing more; and I was as pleased as a child. But my natural discretion prevented me from boasting of it to Clizot or Gonnet, so I said nothing about my letter or the answer.

On the 1st of January, 1755, I wrote in answer to Mlle Potamon's aunt, stating my reasons for writing to her niece quite frankly. This letter was never answered. I was no longer happy in the house, and always went out on Sundays and holidays. I sought the companionship of the Ferrands, especially of Aimée the second sister, as the eldest one was still a little angry with me; and of the sisters Julien, Manon Baron, and pretty Dhall. I formed no attachment for one more than the other, and was the more care-free and good-tempered and entertaining in consequence. From the ordinary point of view this would have been the happiest time of my life, but not from mine; which proves what I have always felt, that dissipation can give no real pleasure save to an empty mind.

I had almost forgotten about Rose, when, on the 12th of January, Mme Chouin saw me passing and called me. I went into her house, and found, not without the greatest surprise. . . . Rose Lambelin there. She assumed an air of sweet timidity which I had never seen in her before. We had a private interview, thanks to Mme Chouin, in the rôle of my protector – or to Rose, I knew not which. It was in sensible conversation that Rose shone: one could be a man with her. Her turn of mind stimulated a flow of wit and of ideas, and, still better, of sentiment. It was a delightful conversation, too soon over. "I do not know why my neighbour called you," she said. "Out of kindness to me; she knew how much I would enjoy the pleasure of seeing you." "Really, Monsieur, your polished manners have more than once excited my admiration! One would say that you had lived in Paris." "I have seen the Capital, it is true, but without seeing it: I was in a school there, and this school was in a hospital, where manners were nothing to marvel at! I am no more than natural and sincere." "Or very subtle!" "Subtle, I? Ah, Rose, you are clever!" "To be honest, I do not credit you with a subtlety intended to deceive: but . . . perhaps it is the more dangerous because it is natural and affectionate. A woman should never risk being alone with a man who can think. He is shy and respectful; but he attacks the heart, and the heart of a young girl is . . . her weakest part." "Not with you, Mademoiselle! With you it is the strongest . . . the most . . ." "Will you not finish your insult – whatever it was?" "Yes, I will finish it, if you will give me your assurance that you will not be vexed." "What assurance can I give you, and how? . . . I am shy with you, because I am conscious of your intelligence, and it makes me ashamed of my paucity of wit and knowledge. . . . How can I give you the assurance for which you ask, otherwise than I have already done?" "Ah, Rose, you are ironical, and with one who knows, perhaps only too well, what you are worth. . . ." "Now we are talking nonsense, which might pass for wit in another's mouth; but for us! . . . Come, how were you going to slander me?" "Well, the word I stopped at was . . . untamable. . . ." "And you were speaking of my heart?" "Yes, of your heart." "You know the part I must play now? I must neither tell you that you are right nor say that you are wrong." "What will you say then?" "What you like." "I would like your heart to be tender and sensitive, easy to win . . . and still more easy to keep . . . constant and faithful . . . faithful . . . even more than constant. . . . You are laughing?" "Yes, what you said just now was nonsense. I wager you meant *more constant than faithful?"* "Let me think. . . . Gad no, *more faithful than constant.*" "Come, this is what I want to know. . . . You are a man . . . but a woman. . . ." "A woman? . . ." "Would say *more* *constant than faithful,* I am sure of that." "So that is how women feel? . . . Yes, it would follow from their physical constitution and their purpose; and . . ." "I like listening to you. . . . Why did you stop?" "I stopped to ask if your heart was such as I would like it to be." "It will be, when I have found anyone worthy of it." "You have found him, fair Rose! he is at your feet!" "Ah, Parisian, Parisian! Get up, get up, if you do not want me to take you for a comedian!" "On my honour I adore you!" "Said without the note of real feeling, I think. . . . I am only seventeen, Monsieur, fresh from a Convent where the rule is strict even for boarders; I know nothing of the ways of the world, or the course of passion and its language: yet a private instinct tells me that, if you ever loved me and told me so, your manner and your tone, your eyes and your language would convince me of your sincerity. . . . Whereas to-day all these things tell me that you are . . . lying. . . . For some time you have dissipated your energy too much for love . . . or even to attend seriously to your work; you are not yourself. I do not know why, but I feel that it is so. . . . When you love, you will be less wasteful of yourself, less flirtatious. You will be serious, and a modest, grave propriety will replace these affectations. . . . Shall I tell you the truth? . . . Yes, I would like to set you an example of honesty: I asked my neighbour to call you in." "Ah, how kind. . . ." "That depends: I wanted to talk to you as one good neighbour to another. In the ballrooms you go about with the worst characters in the town: one of two things, or perhaps both," she added, smiling. "Either you think you are cool-headed and proof against seduction, or you defy the opinion of every honest person, because you are already too corrupt to mind; otherwise you would fear such dangerous companions." "Dangerous! those coarse libertines? Ah, Mademoiselle Rose, the gentler vices are a thousand times more dangerous!"

"Do you think I am so stupid as to fear for you the vices of such as Léger, or Baras-Dallis, or Burat, or Colombat, or Salé, or Lacour, or Jossier-Patagon, and their like? No, you are conscious of your superiority: but you despise them too much, and you go with these low, common, trivial minds, for the sake of admiring and enjoying your own superiority. You will not imitate them, at least not at once; but you leave them with an insolent indulgence for your own more exalted vices; you will say, and even believe without being aware of it: 'Even when I was as bad as that, I was still a great deal better than Baras or Burat or Lenclos! . . .' And you will go down; you will grow more and more like them, you who were made to soar so far above these vile automata. You honour them too much by rubbing shoulders with them! . . . Farewell; my mother may come in at any moment, and I do not want her to know that I have been talking to a young man who . . . enjoys such a bad reputation since his adventure with Mademoiselle Madelon Baron." (She said these last words smiling.) "A bad reputation, Mademoiselle?" "Yes, not as with our Auxerrois for coarseness, backbiting and slander, but . . . for doing, with every appearance of modesty, everything that they shamelessly boast of doing without having done it. Farewell."

She left Mme Chouin's house at once, asking her to tell me to let an interval elapse before I came out myself, and she was only just in time! For I had not even finished thanking my neighbour, before Mme Lambelin got home. The touch of mystery which Rose lent to our interview added to its charm; and it was by such means that this plain but clever girl, ignorant of the arrangement between myself and Mlle Fanchette, wove a web about me which, though no stronger than a spider's, could not be broken without pain when I wanted to do so. But her work was as yet far from perfect, as we shall soon see on the occasion of Lenclos's marriage, to which I was invited.

The day before Toinette's birthday, on the 16th of January, I secretly procured a nosegay from the gardener-florist Potard, and to this I added some biscuits. Wine we could get from the house; Toinette had the keys and was authorised to take it. Also I put two ells of striped muslin in a basket, with two pairs of the finest cotton stockings, bought from Rose's neighbour, Mme Durand; a pair of shoes of blue fabric, and a pair of pink slippers, which I had had made by her own shoemaker; a fine Indian neckerchief of silk patterned with flowers, superb in the brilliance and blending of their colours; and lastly, a pretty pin-cushion for her table, made by the Ursulines; it was lined with sky-blue satin and had four compartments, one for needles and the three others for different kinds of pins. I slipped into the kitchen with my present while Toinette was clearing the table, and then I joined her again in the parlour. "Toinette, to-morrow is your birthday," I said. "I must give you a kiss with my good wishes." She offered me her cheek, and then, as I begged hard, her pretty mouth. I embraced her so ardently that her emotions took fire, and I dragged her into the kitchen. There she was led to make me happy, no doubt by the impetuosity of my passion; for she put no obstacles in my way as with M. Parangon, Bourgoin, and Tourangeot; but gave herself to me utterly, and, through excess of sensibility, with such pleasant accessories that I have never known a woman like her. . . . "Ah, I was carried away!" she said afterwards. "I could not withstand you . . ." and she burst into tears. "Do you regret having made me happy?" I asked her. "No, no, but the sin against God. . . ." I put my arms round her neck, and my tender kisses plunged her once more into an ocean of delights. . . . Together we bathed in them, and I was equal to the gods. . . . At last she freed herself, and fell on her knees before the Christ. I was touched by her piety, all the more ardent for her lively passions, and knelt in prayer beside her, reciting the first Penitential Psalm, composed in circumstances somewhat parallel to mine: *O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.* "O God," said Toinette, when I had finished, "forgive him, for you have planted some love for goodness in his heart!" Then we rose, and I offered her the posy of flowers, with which she was delighted. She thanked me: and I wanted to caress her again: "Oh, no! If I gave myself again, it would not be because my heart forced me to it. . . . No, no, let my master's present be without stain." This instinctive delicacy showed me the full beauty of Toinette's soul: she yielded because she loved me, and because her pleasure in my caresses was so intense that she had not the force to resist them; but at the least suggestion of mere licence all her self-control returned. Moreover, as we have hinted, she wanted a child to love when its father should be far away. Colombe had the same desire and Edmée Servigné too, and another person had it more strongly yet. But I have never found this save in tender and honest hearts. . . . I left her drunk with pleasure; with every possession remorse grew weaker. Madame Parangon and Toinette must have been very much better people than myself, since their falls never made them any more disposed towards vice.

Next day, the 17th, I came down to dinner at noon, full of my pleasures of the day before, which I proposed to repeat that evening. But quite other things were in store for me. Imagine my surprise and my joy when I saw Madame Parangon, who had arrived more than an hour before! I trembled, and was near to falling in a sort of fit. . . . I pulled myself together, however, on account of the others present, and greeted my fair lady. She looked a little pale. She was very gracious to me, but as everyone was there, we only exchanged a few general remarks.

In my note-books I allude to our conversation after supper in these terms: *"Colloquium perjucundum cum hera diva mox Parisiis adventa. . . ."* After the usual compliments and questions, and the necessary information about Mlle Fanchette, who, Colette said, would be with us for the Parish Feast of Maidens (January the 21st), our real conversation began. Never, perhaps, had her manner to me been so sweet, so . . . tender: that is the word. . . . It was so long since we had seen each other; I was enchanted! "I am pleased with you," she said, "and I prefer your present mode of life to too much self-absorption. M. Loiseau has talked to me about you. M. Parangon seems disposed in your favour. Toinette praises you, and cannot speak of you without tenderness. (I love that good girl almost as though she were my sister," she said in parenthesis. "Her devotion is without parallel; it is greater even than Tiennette's. She is well enough satisfied with M. Parangon, who has behaved with decency; M. Tourangeot is the only person against whom . . . she has something to say. But she treated him as he deserved.) Fanchette has gone straight on to Vermenton, as the chaise passes through it, and I did not want her to put off seeing my father; but I have asked him to bring her here on the evening of the 20th. . . . My visit to Paris was successful . . . in more than one way: and I was terribly afraid for its success! It has happened, and that is all I will tell you now . . . some day you will understand what I mean. . . . But something quite extraordinary occurred, which concerns you! An unmarried lady of Versailles came to a house in which I stayed for a time, when I was obliged to be away from my brother; she had a little girl of about five with her, and so pretty that one could not help loving her. The people of the house knew her as a Madame Salocin of Gicours*: a necessary precaution on her part. . . . I gained this lady's confidence, and was myself attracted to her. Her little "niece", as she called her, was really her daughter by an ardent impetuous young man who, when seized by desire, made all things yield before him; and whom she loved in despite of reason and his faults. As I was also passing under an assumed name, Madame Demnod of Nomverten, which sounds like a German district, the lady told me her real name: it was Marguerite Pâris." "Marguerite!" I exclaimed. "Yes, she has a little money of her own, and has made arrangements so that it will go to her daughter and yours." "Ah, Madame, this news means a lot to me! See, I am quite intoxicated. . . . I cannot moderate my joy!" And indeed it shone out in every gesture. Madame Parangon smiled. "I am pleased with you. I repeat this phrase in circumstances where others would scold you. . . . And I love the child! . . . I have told Mlle Pâris that I will be a second mother to her; and she has agreed to my giving her a little companion some day. The child calls me 'aunt,' and that is how I feel towards her." "Madame, you are God's masterpiece! It is ordained that I should owe you everything and never be able to repay!" "I should be vexed if you could! . . . You will repay me by making my sister happy. I make over all your debt to Fanchette and add her intrinsic worth thereto. . . . Do not be afraid that I shall scold you for your little intrigues: I would rather relax the bond than see it broken altogether. . . . You have grown more like other young men; you will be less proud of this some day." (How well this woman understood me! This remark hurt terribly and was more efficacious than any censure!) "But I have done no work since you left, Madame. My books have stayed untouched; I have been carried away by stupid pleasures and parties." "That at least is honest! I do not know whether your usual reading will be useful to you in your proposed career, but my father would like you to concentrate on law, and make the *Praticien Français* your Molière and your Racine." "I will read nothing else," I exclaimed. "And if it gives you the vapours," she said smiling, "you can read something in between." "Ah, you are too kind, Madame; you spoil me." "It is a pleasure to be kind to people one likes, if one can be so without danger! But it is not that: I detest nothing so much as a man who is heavily serious and dull through idleness. I am delighted that you are going about so much, because you are naturally too serious and too reserved and it will break some of that down. You have more need than most to become accustomed to society, and . . . even of some time in the Capital, though I dread this for you. I will go further: perhaps you even need some of its vices to counterbalance your dangerous tendency towards exaltation; a touch, for example, of that cynical indifference towards everything which is affected by the Paris coxcombs, especially for works of art or intellect, and . . . dare I say? towards women. . . . That must sound extraordinary to you! But you are too enthusiastic about our sex: an excellent thing had your first love been your wife; but as things are, your love for women makes you want them all, and with an energy which drives you to defy every law. In your eyes a woman is a dish, a pleasure, a means of happiness; your senses fly to her, and your arms clasp her. Gaudet d'Arras says that this is because you have a strong constitution. That is all very well, if a man has no other end in life but that of the leader of a herd, a stud animal. Ah, Cousin! What would any woman but myself, the mistress of the house in which you live, say to you about Toinette? Did you think that she would not tell me? . . ." (I had not expected this. I was overwhelmed!) "To-morrow you must choose some books, so that my father, who will be staying a fortnight here with Fanchette, may see you working at what he calls solid subjects. You have an excellent memory; and will only need a few days to appear to know your subject." "Madame, I have already read the *Praticien Français* at my father's, and I have seen it among the old books here: I will run through it to-morrow. Look, here it is. . . . And I will read Renusson's three Treatises on *Deeds of Gift*, on *Wills*, and on *Entails*, and Pothier's *Obligations*." "What, do you already know something about the subject?" "A little, Madame." "Oh, I will see that my father hears about that. . . . I do not know what you can be thinking of me. You must certainly consider me indulgent . . . to excess, after what happened yesterday. Who would forgive you? Tell me, if you can. . . ." "He and she who understand me through and through, God and yourself." "I like that answer, as I like everything about you; you who are maligned by everyone except God and myself. I know beyond all possible doubt that you did not do what you did out of wantonness or intent to harm; and, as I said to my penitent Toinette this morning, God is the only one who has not been in any way offended; for in this I agree with Gaudet d'Arras's comment on a previous occasion, that God would certainly have been offended by any alternative you could have chosen. With him, I draw a distinction between crimes against nature, and actions contrary to human institutions; the latter will leave no permanent scar on such a heart as yours. You have wronged Toinette; but I am here to repair the evil; and this is the task I have set myself for my whole life, to diminish the harm you do, or convert it into good. Should my Toinette become a mother, I will see that it brings her happiness instead of grief. I understand your temperament: you are endowed by nature with ardent passions, but are devoid of depravity and all evil intention. What you have done has always been a lesser evil than if you had abstained. . . . I owed you this explanation of my indulgence, for otherwise, in the bottom of your mind, it might have looked like criminal connivance. . . . Ah, far from conniving, I have punished you, although it grieved my heart to do so. Your wife went on without your seeing her! How could your lips have touched hers in Toinette's presence! It would have been so indecent that I cannot bear to think of it. . . ."

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*"Salocin" is an obvious anagram of "Nicolas" and "Gicours" of "Courgis," as also, a little later "Nomverten" of "Vermenton." We know that Restif was fond of such anagrams, fashionable in his time, and it here appears that, quite independently, Madame Parangon and even Marguerite Pâris the housekeeper also used them. [Ed.]

Ever since the words: *I like this answer, as I like everything about you* . . . I had been on my knees before my guardian angel, my face hidden in her lap, my rapt soul drinking in her modesty and innocence. . . . I was just about to pour forth expressions of gratitude and thanks, when I heard the half-door open. I took out a light and it was Tourangeot. Madame Parangon detained him, no doubt to rebuke him on the matter of Toinette. I was dismissed.

I have remembered certain details of this conversation, which I had before omitted, while setting up to-day, the 7th of July, 1794; but now I think that no part of it has been forgotten. With good reason I call it *colloquium perjucundum* in my note-book. We had no further conversation until the 20th, the day on which my second father arrived with Mlle Fanchette. During this short interval, I lived very quietly; from evening until midnight I devoured the books I had mentioned, so that I might seem to know my subject on the first day of the visit. I saw Toinette from time to time; but Madame Parangon had added to my regard for this beautiful girl by giving me a fuller understanding of her integrity, and I treated her with the greatest respect. She appreciated this deeply, for I heard her say to her mistress, speaking of me: "I think that young man is unique in spite of all his faults; and even these are not detestable as they are in other men. . . . If you are friendly to him he does not immediately get bold and familiar." "That is true, Toinette, and if it were not so, do you think that I should treat him differently from the others, and forgive such grave misdemeanours as his?" Here Madame Parangon hit the mark. If any good can be said of me, it is that I have always respected a woman more after favours granted, I would dare to say even such as Tonton. . . . Nature wills it so, saying: *Respect the treasure that you have deposited with a woman.*

At mid-day on the 20th, I heard that Colette's honoured father had arrived with his youngest daughter. I just made myself clean and tidy and then went down, almost trembling with nervousness. Colette was sitting on her father's knee, with Fanchette in front of her, holding her sister's hands. Madame Parangon got up, blushing a little, when I came in. "What do you think of him?" she whispered to her father. "A fine lad, and he has always been considered a well-behaved one. The elder Monsieur Droin, of the River Villages, a good friend of mine, always speaks of him as the *bashful girl*; and I would never have suspected him." Thanks to my extremely acute ears I overheard this, although my passage was obstructed by a group of people. These noticed me at last, and allowed me to approach. I bowed profoundly to this venerable man, blushing and not knowing how to look at him. He saw that he must put me at my ease. "How are you, my dear friend?" he asked. I supplemented my trivial reply with a gesture of respect, and kissed his hand. "My eldest daughter tells me that you are already acquainted with the Pratique?" "Slightly: if it should please you to question me at any time, Monsieur, I will try to answer to your satisfaction." "We will see about that by and by. Go and say something to Fanchette." I took my place by her and congratulated her on having grown, and upon her added elegance and charm, which would make her transcend all our Beauties next day. The inspiration of Colette's presence lent warmth and animation to my compliments. M. Collet and his daughters seemed well satisfied with me, and the former said to his eldest daughter: "He has wit, and speaks well; he has developed beyond my hopes although I expected a great deal of him! I shall be able to make that good man his father very happy the first time he visits us. . . . I think that Fanchette will be happy with him: she likes him and" (speaking very low) "we must keep our young men away from her after she returns. At present she receives them . . . we must see! For my part, I have merely said that she is promised and betrothed. . . ." Madame Parangon kissed her father at these words, saying that her own happiness lay in her sister's and mine.

We sat down to table. I chatted to Fanchette, while lending an attentive ear to her father's conversation, though without appearing to do so. Our almost isolated position at table gave me a chance to exercise my gift for pleasing, and I talked to her with the gay, sweet familiarity of long acquaintanceship. She seemed to like this very much, for she responded with those little childish phrases which are so charming in a pretty girl's mouth. And Fanchette was pretty beyond description; my hope of winning her was well founded; and between my ardent love for her sister and my genuine respect for her father, she seemed to me a fairy above humanity. Two or three times I ventured to call her: "My dear little wife," in a whisper. The first time she blushed, and answered: "Monsieur, I am honoured by that title." The second time, she gently pressed the hand which had found hers, and said: "My father and my sister have chosen you for me." A relative, who was not in the secret, noticed that we were talking privately together, and said to me: "Monsieur, it is not good manners to whisper in public to a girl as young as my cousin." Fanchette blushed, and I turned as pale as if I had committed a crime. Even Madame Parangon lost countenance. But this indiscreet rebuke was tactfully carried off by M. Collet: "As I am present, Cousin, it was for me to speak, or for one of her sisters" (Mme Minon and her husband were dining with us), "and more particularly the mistress of the house, Madame Parangon. . . . But I commend these two young people for not having answered you, although they had my countenance; for I consider young people who answer their elders, such as you and myself, and will not put up with anything, as spendthrifts, consuming all life's gifts at once and keeping nothing for old age." And then, looking at me: "Pour me out some wine, friend." The lady who had spoken stammered out apologies, but he took no notice; he was nettled, and as Mlle Fanchette and I maintained a serious formality, he said to me: "Nicolas, my friend and son of my friend, I see nothing wrong in your whispering to my daughter in company; you come of honest people, and are yourself an honourable man. This is no town butterfly, Cousin," he said, turning to his relative, "but a serious, hard-working young man, a lover of books and of manual work; he has no time to learn bad habits; still less to corrupt others." He was clearly annoyed. Madame Parangon adroitly changed the conversation. I rose directly I had finished, and I could see from their smiles that the sisters approved of this. "Do not go, son Nicolas," said M. Collet. "I have something to say to you." I stood behind his chair, as I answered: "I am at your orders, Monsieur." "I want to put you through an examination in jurisprudence: but in private, for the subject is not amusing. Take your books to my bedroom upstairs;

I only want my three daughters and my two sons-in-law to witness your triumph, or your discomfiture; that is if they care to be present." I went upstairs, and ran through the summaries of Renusson's three treatises, while waiting. A glance was enough to remind me of the principal points in the *Praticien Français.*

M. Collet, followed by his daughters and his sons-in-law, came up in about an hour. I repeated the summaries of the three Treatises by heart, giving the impression that I had analysed the subjects of *deeds of gift*, *entails* and *wills.* My father's friend was delighted. As he knew the *Ancien Praticien Français* pretty well, he dwelt somewhat heavily on this book, and three of my audience, Mme Minon, her husband, and M. Parangon first began to yawn and then slipped away. "Good," said M. Collet. "I did that on purpose so that they should leave us. . . . Daughter," he continued, addressing Madame Parangon, "that old Monsieur Droin whom I mentioned, a most worthy man, always told my friend Restif de la Bretonne that his son Nicolas was something out of the common. And I agree. . . . Some day, Fanchette, you may find that you have done better than either of your sisters." He got up, and dismissed me: "My friend, I will not keep you longer." I went up to the printing-room, and set to work as energetically as if I had never been disturbed. This faculty of going back to work after being distracted from it by a meal or some other amusement, or by business, has always distinguished me from my fellow printers.

For the first time that evening I had supper in town with M. and Mme Parangon. I gave my hand to the latter, Fanchette walked with her father, and M. Parangon escorted Mme Minon, who had come to fetch us and with whom we were taking supper. I was already like one of the family. My place was next to Fanchette. At table M. Collet was loud in my praise: he extolled my family and its fame throughout the district for strict integrity. He mentioned my brother the Curé, who bore an excellent reputation, and the Abbé Thomas, who passed for a saint; in a word, he told his sons-in-law all about their future relative by marriage. Gaudet, who was well thought of by the Minons, finished what the old man had begun. The lad truly loved me, and vaunted what he termed my superiority over my comrades, rather as he saw it than as it really was. He described several occasions on which I had prevented my companions from certain degrading excesses. "Ah, that may well be!" exclaimed M. Collet. "He would be very unlike his father and his forebears if he did otherwise. When we were young, it was always Edme Restif who acted as a brake and prevented harm being done. . . ." Madame Parangon had not expected Gaudet to confirm her good opinion of me, and was charmed to find herself justified; she added that, if I amused myself at the kind of parties Gaudet described, it was by her advice. She did not think it wise to concentrate on work too early; a man must be young before he settled down, otherwise the proper order might be reversed, and he would play the boy when he should be a man. "Quite right," agreed M. Collet, "each thing to its time, and wisdom out of place is folly. I have seen disastrous effects follow on premature devotion to work! It must be avoided.

First the green fruit, then the mature,
That's the way of Lady Nature,

as the proverb says, or the poet, I forget which. . . ."

After supper everyone played cards, except Mlle Fanchette and myself. We sat on either side of Colette and were more interested in her game than she was herself. She won. "I brought you luck, sister!" cried Fanchette.

Colette gazed at her with shining eyes and kissed her twice, saying: "Yes, yes, you bring me luck, my darling! . . ."

O happy times, and even now balm to my life! And yet what were you? Passing dreams of an illusory happiness, but so sweet as still to lay a charm upon my pain! . . . O happy times! As a wave passes, urged by the one behind, always different, always seeming the same, so you passed, and so do all life's moments pass: they fly and are gone for ever, yet time seems always the same. The human river of age, maturity, youth, and infancy, flows on and we see the same follies and the same crimes, thinly sprinkled with virtues. An immortal watching from afar would think man eternal as himself: yet he exists but for an instant! One moment of life, often of misery, and he vanishes for ever into the gulf of eternity, as the river is engulfed by the sea!* When the time came to go home, I offered my hand to Mlle Fanchette by M. Collet's wish; Collette and Mme Minon walked on either side of their father, their husbands taking the outside. . . . "This has been a most happy evening for me, Mademoiselle," I said to Mlle Fanchette. "I have enjoyed it as much as you." "Ah, by that gracious word you double the charm!" "I have no wish to conceal my feelings from you: we come from the same district; our families are friends; I look upon you as one of my brothers, and can talk to you without constraint; and this pleases my dear sister. I have formed a good opinion of you and trust you, because

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*Physically, the stream of men is always the same: the son is the product of his father's life; the grandson is generally like his grandfather or great-grandfather, with such differences as are introduced through the mother; and so on, as long as there is life on any globe. And is it not so with rivers? Their water joins the sea, is drawn up thence by the sun, condenses in clouds, falls in rain and snow, and thus replenishes the rivers? . . . How beautiful and comforting is the study of Nature! It reveals the truth, unless by an excess of ignorance we blind ourselves as did Bernardin-Saint-Pierre. . . . Thus I take advantage of the most trivial events in my life to lead certain of my Readers back to truth, and prepare the way for my *Physique*, which will conclude this work.

she likes you; she is not easy to please and I am content to trust her taste and look no further." "They called you a child at supper a little while ago, and you reason like Wisdom herself." "I say what I think." "How happy I should be if I could see you every day, Mademoiselle, and how much more sensible!" "I too like being with you very much. . . . I have been collecting information about your family for some time past, from people who know it . . . and some of the tales about one of your ancestors, who was called the Just, touched me deeply. For example, I was told that once a son of his unintentionally damaged a neighbour's field by turning his plough over the end of it. Restif the Just noticed this when he went to inspect his new-sown corn; and although no complaint had been made, since it was impossible to avoid turning over the end of the other's field even though it was sown, when the harvest came he put five sheaves of corn into his poor neighbour's field. The latter refused them, because it was the custom to turn on each other's boundaries: so much the worse for the man who had sown earliest. 'That may be good enough for other people,' answered Restif the Just, 'but it is not good enough for me. People have been kind enough to call me the Just, and I feel bound by this to do more than is required of others. . . .' I was impressed by this anecdote, and my father too said it was very fine!" "Hearing it for the first time from your lips, Mademoiselle, it is divine." We had reached our destination, and chatted for a little in front of the door. At a sign from her father, Mlle Fanchette went in first, as is customary for the youngest. I said to Madame Parangon, who remained behind for a word with Toinette: "She is no child, but another you."

Next day, the 21st, was the Feast of Maidens, and Mlle Fanchette was to take the collection, as she had been invited by the others to be their leader, with all the honours that went with this position, and a certain expenditure which made the distinction something of a burden to girls who were not well off. Both Colette and Fanchette, however, had inherited a considerable legacy from two maiden aunts, the favourites of two noble ladies in Paris. Pretty Fanchette had volunteered to distribute the blessed bread, etc., and so was dressed for the occasion. The first thing in the morning I hurried to the gardener Potard to get two posies. I procured magnificent flowers, considering the season: two roses and four white carnations for Fanchette, and a posy all in red for Madame Parangon. . . . I had told no one what I meant to do. The night before I had composed a poem, and written it out on a large sheet of paper, which I meant to roll into a cornet; it was an acrostic, a form much admired in the provinces, and set to the air *Folies d'Espagne*. It was in four quatrains: the first line began with a dedicatory À, and the remaining fifteen with the letters in the names Fanchette Collet. But as I never copied these verses into my note-books and the loose sheet on which they were composed was lost, I can only remember them imperfectly. I made my appearance, ready dressed, just as it was time to start for mass, and presented my posies. Madame Parangon caught sight of the writing on Fanchette's cornet, and unrolled it. She thought the acrostic an admirable idea (I do not think she had ever seen one before, and believed I had invented it). Her father, to whom she showed it, was equally enthusiastic, and wanted to know if I had really produced this masterpiece myself. . . . I assured him that I had and added that M. Parangon, if he showed it to him, would find nothing marvellous about it. "No," said the old man, "it was written for my daughter, and I shall put it away; she has seen it, and my Colette; let it remain between us four. I do not want my opinion contradicted, even with good reason. . . . That is the right way to love, my friend, when it is only a question of witty trifles and compliment, etc.; put on blinkers for your friends, and never go out of your way to be undeceived." "Papa," said Madame Parangon, "read them to Fanchette!" "Has she not read them yet?" "No, I saw them first, and thought it better not to read them aloud." "That's my Colette!" said the old man, and recited the following verses to Fanchette, which I set down after the event as well as I can remember them.

> *My heart must needs offer a white posy to my Fanchon, as she attires herself for this fair day. Let us match fresh flowers, to be the innocent decoration of her breast and head.*
>
> *It is as a bridegroom, drunken with tenderness, and happy because of you, that I have found my hope: encourage a timidity that has no wish but to owe all to you, O father of my sweetheart.*
>
> *Boldness was never a fault of mine and I expect nothing save what is given in kindness. Alas, will Colette be propitious, forgetting my unworthiness?*
>
> *Tongue of the Gods, to praise is your sole task in speaking of Colette! And I conjoin her name with that of Fanchette within these verses: for the two are my happiness.*

Fanchette repeated the verses three times, and then Madame Parangon put them away with every honour, promising to give them back to her father when he left. That such an intelligent woman should make much of verses so bad, may be surprising; but, as she said to me herself: "If they had been good, how could we have shown our affection for you by admiring them? It was your sentiments that my father liked, and he admired the ingenuity with which you introduced all three of us into your Acrostic. Besides the last verse was not without merit." When the posies had been fastened in place, each of the two Beauties took a flower from her breast for papa, for the husband and myself. At last we set out. Fanchette looked quite like a bride, and her sister was in an ecstasy of joy. Our neighbours formed an escort for the two sisters. I gazed at Fanchette, radiant with a soft brightness, and my vanity was flattered to see that there was none so fair. When we arrived at the Church, everyone wondered who she was, as she was not generally known; but one glance at her sister was sufficient answer. She took the largest collection ever remembered for a young girl. She was not with us for dinner; Mme Thierrat took her off with six other girls, all of whom promised to be beautiful, and we did not see her again until Vespers. Loiseau congratulated me, and in a whisper expressed astonishment at my dissipation, and my attentiveness to all the pretty workgirls of the ballroom. I answered with a Spanish proverb, a language I was just beginning to learn:

Quien canta, sus males espanta
The ills of one who sings have wings.

"My friend," I added, "a man walking on hot coals, finds it difficult to stop. . . ." He could not follow my drift; which was natural considering my apparent position.

In the evening Toinette went to fetch our sweet Fanchette, as Mme Thierrat wanted to keep her, and we had been invited to supper by Manon's father, M. Bourgoin. Loiseau and the foreman were there too. And there my friend saw Colette for the first time in all her sweetness, Fanchette with her adorable little coaxing ways, and Mme Minon forgetting to be proud. Manon, who was always easy to get on with, was quite delightful! And in sheer joy he sang an arietta which was new at the time:

Ah, leave my heart at liberty,
Yea, leave my heart in charity,

an enjoyable ebullition, as he had a very agreeable voice and had seen the actor *Rochart.* "All these well-behaved young men take fire like tow directly they see an attractive woman," said M. Parangon primly to his father-in-law, "but it all dies out as soon as their ladies . . ."

After supper we played, and my little sweetheart and I were partners; we pooled our stakes and won, which was regarded as a happy augury.

Mlle Fanchette and her worthy father only stayed a week instead of a fortnight; but it was a week of festivity, during which I was the happiest lover in the world: I worked, I read law, and I made love; so that everyone was pleased.

One day when I was being questioned at table on the jurisprudence I had learnt during the day, Bourgoin said: "But how does he do it? He is always at work, and he studies at the same time!" "We sleep too much," I answered. "One must not get too soft." "I can see that one gets nothing without working for it," answered the foreman. "That's true!" exclaimed M. Collet. "An industrious man has to work hard, but he is happy; an idle man does not live, he merely exists. . . ." Not a day passed without a private conversation with my sweetheart. We were nearly always overheard, but we did not know this – at least not at first: I noticed it at last, and you can imagine how I behaved afterwards.

END OF VOLUME FIVE IN RESTIF'S EDITION

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PROJECTED BY THE AUTHOR

FOR THIS VOLUME

36. THE MASQUERADE

Monsieur Nicolas following a fine masquerade, with horses and an open Thespian chariot whereon Mme Villetard is represented boxing her husband's ears. He is escorting the five Dlles Morillon, the widow Pernon and Mlle Douy. A hostile band is seen approaching, and the brawl begins: "Ho, fellows!" [page 16]

37. OH, SHAME!

Monsieur Nicolas is holding little Marianne Lagneau among the vines. Tonton Lenclos, who is there with Gonnet, is egging her on: "Do not think to play the prude so that you can talk ill of me!" [page 21]

38. THE ASSAULT

Monsieur Nicolas taking Madame Parangon in his arms as she stoops to descend. One hand is daringly placed. "Put me down!" "No!" [page 30]

39. REPENTANCE

Monsieur Nicolas near the river on the Promenade des Bénédictines at ten o'clock in the evening. He is being helped to his feet by two young men, Dhall and Baras Dallis: "Has anyone ill-treated you? . . . Let us run after them!" [page 49]

40. COLOMBE'S FAREWELLS

Monsieur Nicolas on the high road to Paris holding Colombe in his arms. She is almost out of the trap: "I am delighted that I failed!" And with these words, her tears. . . . [page 76]

41. THE ILE D'AMOUR

Monsieur Nicolas pretending to read under the poplars on the southern slope of the Ile d'Amour. Above him are two groups, one of seven ladies and the other of nine young girls. One of the former is saying: "There is some one very much absorbed in his book!" In the background some frightened girls are seen running away. [*page* 89]

42. THE PLEDGES

Monsieur Nicolas accepting Mlle Fanchette's watch as a pledge, at Mme Parangon's command. The latter is holding out another one: "This is yours." "Then I may give it to her!" [*page* 105]

43. THE BALLROOM

Monsieur Nicolas dancing L'Aimable Vainqueur *under his master's eye and before a crowd of young people of both sexes. La Maris is saying: "Lud! He is a good dancer!" Among the crowd: Mlles Gaudon, Guiller, Bourdignon, Picard, Gendot, Morillon, Ferand, Coquille, Laurent, Douy, Huot, Maîne Lebègue, Lucot, Valois, Laconche, Duchamp, Babet, Naturelle Borne, Rezard, etc.* [*page* 118]

44. THE SCREEN. TOINETTE TRIPPED UP

M. Parangon catching sight of Monsieur Nicolas behind the overturned screen, just as he has torn apart Toinette's fichu. He still has hold of her. Luce screams as she is revealed at M. Nicolas's feet; while M. Parangon, astonished at finding himself with witnesses, says: "What the devil have we here? Ah, it is little Luce!"

In the background, Tourangeot has seized and tripped up Toinette, and is seen holding her tightly, just as Luce has put out her hand and pricked him. [*page* 159]

FOURTH EPOCH

Continued

1755

FOURTH EPOCH

(*continued*)

OWING to business this estimable old man was obliged to leave us nine days afterwards. On the evening of the eighth, as we were sitting at table, he said to us: "I have to go to-morrow, children, and shall take my little housekeeper with me; you make too much of her here, and would spoil her. But, had I been able to leave her behind, I should have made the one of you who might be thought most dangerous responsible for remonstrating respectfully from time to time with her elder sisters." "That is to be too trusting," laughed M. Minon. "Put no faith in lovers, father!" I said nothing, though all eyes were turned to me; I should have considered it a presumption to appear to have any share in what was passing. "What do you think, friend Nicolas?" asked the old man. "Since you command me to speak, I will do so; but not until M. Parangon, who was on the point of saying something, has made his contribution." "Oh, it was nothing . . . I was only going to say that the more serious and hard-working a lad, and the more afraid he is of being seen doing . . . what others do, the more I distrust him. . . . That was all." "Then I ask permission to answer you and M. Minon together, and in general terms, since your remarks have no particular application. If M. Parangon and M. Minon are referring to the association between young people of opposite sexes for purposes of amusement only, they are right; that is, unless the men are exceptionally discreet and genuinely conscientious. But far from being justified in what they say about a serious hard-working lad, who is seemingly if not actually well-behaved, these enlightened gentlemen are not even right about the commonality of this town, when it is a question of marriage. As I associate with them – and I may say that I meet every class (at different times, for they do not mix) from a councillor's son to the humblest artisan – I understand their way of thinking. The eldest Deschamps of the chapter house, a decent, well-educated young man, said to me one morning: 'My friend, I consider that an honourable man should always approach the woman who is to be his wife, with the greatest respect; for he should remember that the most solid foundation of his happiness, when he is a father, will be the irreproachable life of his companion. I carry this respect to the point of reverencing my own body as I reverence hers; for I do not want to wed my future wife to the flesh of an unprincipled rake: it would be a monstrous alliance. . . .' So much for young men of education, and ones who pass here for decent folk. Another day I happened to meet Baras-Dallis, and he took me back with him to his house, where he was entertaining Léger, Piffou and Dhall. During the meal they discussed their ways of making love. One of them said that he did not care how he behaved with the type of vulgar coquette whom he would be very sorry to make his wife. 'Quite right; I agree with you,' answered Baras-Dallis. 'But when I am with Mlle Douy it is quite another thing; she is going to be my wife, and I would not even kiss her on the cheek.' 'That is what I think,' said Léger. 'A man should be as circumspect with his betrothed as with his sister.' 'And I go further,' said Dhall, 'because there is no danger between a brother and sister, whereas there is between two people who are engaged; and I maintain that, if a man calls on his betrothed and finds her alone, he should retire at once, out of respect for her reputation.' 'Oh, that is a bit too much,' cried Piffou; but the three others agreed with Dhall that that was what they should and would do. . . . I do not think I am inferior to these men in proper feeling, and I protest upon my honour that I am absolutely in agreement with them." "A good defence, my friend," exclaimed M. Collet, "for I warn you that it was you they were attacking." "Oh, do you really believe all that is true, father?" asked M. Minon. "What does it matter? If he invented it, he is free to do so. But it may be true, and, if he tells me it is, I shall believe him. It might also be a sort of parable; but nothing alters the fact that he has expressed his views very well." While her father was speaking, Madame Parangon was gazing at me with an enchanting expression. As no one made any comment on M. Collet's remarks, he continued: "Did this conversation with the four or five young men, and the one with M. Deschamps really take place?" "Yes, Monsieur, I myself heard what I have just repeated; and I can prove it, if anyone likes. It is possible that Deschamps is at this moment with his cousins, the Barons, and if you permit it, I will fetch him. . . ." "Yes, I would like you to. . . ." I ran over to our neighbours, and actually found Deschamps there; he was very much in love with Berdon at this time. I took him aside to explain what had brought me. He followed me immediately, and confirmed what I had just said about his way of thinking, putting it even more strongly. He added that, one holiday, I had retailed to him a conversation between certain young men who shared his views, and he went on to repeat this, without my having had the time to describe it to him in advance. "I believed you on your word alone," said M. Collet to me, "but I wanted to convince the others." He thanked Deschamps for his kindness, and showed a great respect for him. "Associate with friends like that," he advised me.

Father and daughter left us after breakfast next day. When he had kissed his daughters and sons-in-law, the old man embraced me and recommended the study of jurisprudence, as the royal road to all things. I watched him go with a profound regret, as though I had a presentiment that I should never see him again. . . . Even in the presence of Fanchette, even during our pleasantest conversations together, I never had that feeling of expansion which comes with assured happiness; in the face of all evidence, I could not be convinced of mine. . . . But I turned at once to my amusements; Madame Parangon urged me to do so, and, at the same time, strictly avoided my society.

I had almost forgotten Toinette in the rapture of Mlle Fanchette's visit, and I was a little ashamed of myself at first; but she soon put me at my ease, displaying her generous disposition to the full. I even began to desire her again, or rather she became the focus of all my desires for young Fanchette and her adorable sister. And I was satisfied three days after the estimable M. Collet's departure. Did Madame Parangon shut her eyes to my behaviour, finding it less criminal than any other lapse, in consideration of Toinette's generous devotion? . . . I do not know; but she was aware of all that happened, and neither rebuked me nor showed any anger against me. . . . It is obvious that, with such consolations, I could not suffer excessively from the pains of separation.

I had something else as well to occupy my mind. For some time past Loiseau's apparent intimacy with Bourgoin had only continued because of the love affair of each. The foreman had become the lover of a certain Mlle Huot, a strapping good-humoured girl, and she and her two sisters were friends of Maîne Lebègue, who had won honest Loiseau's heart. The first time that I went out to dance again, I met Burat's Julie with Jeannette Demailly on my way, and escorted them to Calais's ballroom. Calais had once been a very fashionable dancing master, but he had been forgotten during a long absence from the town. The minuets were just beginning when, drawn by the sounds of the violin, the three sisters Huot entered, with the eldest and the youngest of the sisters Gendot (the only pretty ones out of five) and Maîne Lebègue, friend of the Huots and cousin of the Gendots. Loiseau was leading Maîne the Nightingale by the hand, and Bourgoin was behind them. I was sitting between my two chicks, when Loiseau came up to me: "Are you alone?" he asked. "Alone? with a Grace on either side of me?" (We know that young Demailly had a charming face.) "Ah, you are with these ladies? You are not to be pitied!" I rose and joined him. "Is that pretty little person yet another love?" he asked. "For Julie has her own lover, and you have reconciled them, from what I hear." "No, I have but one love." "Well and good! But what a seductive face!" "Are you in love with it, Sir Philosopher?" "I? No; I am afraid of these pretty darlings when everyone runs after them. It is too difficult to keep them. . . . But I am taking you away from your sweet friends. . . ." "They are talking to each other." "I must introduce them to our ladies and we will join parties." This came about without our intervention, for they were already acquainted, as Mlle Demailly, a young orphan, was apprentice to a furrier next door to the drapery and dressmaking establishment of the sisters Huot. We did not stay long at the hall; one of the Huots went with Bourgoin to get permission from Julie's employers and Jeannette's parents, for the two girls to come with us to a ball that was to last the night. Her mission was successful as she was highly esteemed in the Quarter, and we all went there together. . . .

About ten o'clock there was a scandalous scene. Lenclos was about to marry a rich and ugly heiress, and *Joan* of the mounted police, and his sisters, who were neighbours of the bride to be, had brought Tonton to the ball, knowing nothing of her reputation as they all lived at the other end of the town by the Porte du Pont. The sisters Joan were with their lovers, and Joan had his mistress, so that Tonton was left alone. She had bowed to me on entering, so the ever considerate Loiseau, seeing that she had no cavalier, made himself polite to her, and took her to have refreshments, etc. The sisters Huot opened their eyes, and at last Maîne gave him a hint. Loiseau got the idea that the pretty blonde had a husband or a jealous lover, and left her without a word of explanation. No woman would go near her; she was completely isolated. She saw Gonnet, and went up to him; but he was with Trébuchet, his intended; and, as Tonton was a neighbour of hers and therefore well known to her, he was obliged to repulse the girl. Then she came up to me. I could not be rude to a woman with whom I had measured myself more than once, so I danced with her; but this displeased Jeannette and Julie, and I was obliged to escort her to a distant seat and leave her there. I said to the other men: "She is a pretty girl; out of courtesy, each of you do as much as I have done." They agreed, and Loiseau danced with her. But when others would have done the same, they were summoned so imperiously by their ladies, that they had to return or vex them. Gradually the ball became a rout: the men had to pay, and to lessen expenses, everyone was admitted, including a number of foreigners. The latter soon realised Tonton's position and crowded round her to have some fun with her, thinking her worse than she was: just a girl to be had for a trifle by the first comer. They insulted her. . . . No one could see or hear what was happening to her, encircled as she was, and because of all the noise of the violins and the dancing; but finally, harassed beyond endurance, she began to utter piercing shrieks which could be heard above all else. I know that vice must be penalised, but within measure; and women are cruel to one another. They tried to prevent us from going to Tonton's rescue, but we went all the same: I first, then Loiseau, and finally the gigantic Joan; but we were the only ones. Joan got hold of her most ruthless assailant, a Provençal, by the back of his coat and lifting him right up above the others, dropped him on their heads. . . . This feat of strength dumbfounded these men from Germany, Flanders, Lyons, Provence and Gascony. Loiseau escorted the rescued Tonton home, and was scolded for it by the ladies: according to them, it would have been enough to put her outside the door: "You treat bad and good women alike!" they said. The sisters Joan were deeply ashamed of having brought her. Luckily Lenclos and his betrothed had not come to the ball, although they had been asked to join the party. The incident was related to the bride to be; but she was attached to her Lenclos with all the obstinacy of a plain woman in love; she wanted him, and was heedless of the well-deserved affront put upon her sister-in-law. Tonton's escort was rigorously dealt with; even to the point of being forced upon his knees to make full apology for his chivalrous conduct; and he was not forgiven until he had delivered a witty harangue, in which he proved that he had only taken Tonton home out of respect for her sex in general, and that, moreover, he was not acquainted with her. He added that he had not acted without thought and would do the same again in similar circumstances, even at the risk of having to ask pardon on his knees as he had just done. This last scene amused me. But I was conscious that night pleasures were not for me; they depressed me, and I determined never to stay up all night again. Apparently very electric persons, such as myself, have need of rest once the sun has passed below the horizon, and cannot, without painful effort, oppose the natural torpor which then inclines all living creatures to inaction.

The day after the ball Lenclos invited me to be one of his groomsmen, the chief, I think: a position I did not accept. Gonnet, Rüttot, Treisignies, etc., were also asked, as well as Yeury, the groom's uncle. Tonton was queen of the festivities, and many pretty girls of the quarter, friends or relations of the bride, were present. It is hard to give any idea of how completely I indulged myself in dissipation during the two days of the bridals; attracted less, I think, by the more riotous pleasures than by the fascination which one of the guests exercised upon me. Yet another inconsistency; they are all too frequent in my story! But I must begin at the beginning and tell things as they occurred.

On the eve of the wedding, we gave some serenades; thus I found out who were to be the Beauties of the party. I was not acquainted with them, and awaited the morrow with impatience. I was not present at the wakening serenade; but during Mass, I cast an inquisitive eye over my company for the next two days, and, the bride excepted, it looked most agreeable. Tonton, who had lost her head, was the complete wanton; and Mlle Luidivine, a friend of the bride whom I have already mentioned and with whom I chatted in Church, stared at her, and said: "I am not in key with the rest of you. That girl revolts me, and I would rather go home and grieve alone for my friend; for I do not think that Lenclos will make her happy." I expressed deep regret, but nothing could shake her resolution; even though Treisignies, our laced and ruffled printer, an admirer of all conspicuous Beauties and lover of her friend, Jeanne Girard, made every effort to persuade her.

Dinner was only indifferently amusing, as we had not yet made each other's acquaintance. On leaving the table, Tonton, who wanted some of the sugar plums with which I had filled my pockets, took me to the bridal chamber, and there pointed, in so . . . shameless a manner . . . to the bed, that I, Fanchette's betrothed and worshipper of Mme Parangon. . . . My fall was not unnatural, but it was so remote from any kind of morality that it cannot but be revolting. . . . Luidivine had attracted me at Mass; Tonton could not hold me save for a moment; and she whom I was to find so fascinating was not present at dinner, so I cast desirous glances at *Joséphine Fourchot*, though she was more amiable than pretty. I was assiduous in my attentions to her until just before supper, when *Ursule Meslot* appeared, adorned by all the Graces. I could have adored this Meslot had I been free. There was something so appealing about her: the tones of her voice went straight to the heart; the gait and make of her were voluptuous; her supple waist had all the slenderness of a Comtoise, her full bosom was high and white. . . . She was a brand of desire from head to foot, and all my strongest passions became, for the moment, in abeyance because of her. I left everyone else, and went straight up to her as though she were a familiar and expected friend, and thereafter never left her side; to the great astonishment of Joséphine, who could not conceive how it was I knew her neighbour so intimately while she herself had never seen me; for I never went to their quarter of the town save on my way to Sacy and back. After we had talked some time together, Ursule said to me with an ingenuous astonishment which showed how well she understood my sentiments towards her: "I thought you were Tonton's lover!" "That has never been, but if it had, it would cease now. . . ." "Why? She is a nice girl, isn't she?" "Without detracting in any way from her personal merits, I happen to know some one who is more attractive and more accomplished." "Oh, then you have a mistress?" "I do not know yet, but perhaps . . . you could . . . tell me?" "I? But I cannot predict your fortune!" "I do not agree; because you are intimately connected with the person whom I like better than Tonton Lenclos." "Ah, is it Joséphine?" "No, nearer than that." "Hélène Luidivine then?" "Nearer still." "Oh, but who, then? I cannot think of anyone else; because it couldn't be Amatre Guillier?" "Oh, no!" "Is she here?" "Certainly." "But the only attractive girls I see here you could easily get to know. Did you meet her first at the wedding?" "Faith, it was no longer ago!" "That's quick! I see you are susceptible." "Did I not hear the bride call you 'Ursule' a moment ago, Mademoiselle?" "Yes, Monsieur." "Then now I know the whole name: Ursule Meslot." "Yes, that is my name." I quickly twisted up a poke of sugar plums, and wrote on the paper: *If you want to know the name of Her I love, it is the same as yours, Ursule Meslot*; and then presented it, saying: "You cannot have been given any, Mademoiselle, as you did not arrive in time." She accepted it smiling and, seeing the writing, began to read aloud: *Her I love . . . the same . . .* (and she turned the paper over) *Ursule M . . . eslot.* But she did not finish her own name. "We are making carnival here," she said, "so anything is permissible." "In that case, I may vow that I adore you." "Yes, but, anything is permitted, because everything is in play. . . . So this is my answer, I vow that I do not believe a word of it." "We are both telling the truth," I answered. "Joséphine," she called to her pretty neighbour, who happened to be near us, "will you do me a favour?" "What is it?" "Help me to put a liar to confusion. . . . This gentleman maintains that he told you that he loved you with all his heart, and that you would not believe him?" "I do not remember him saying so, nor, consequently, answering him as you say I did, my friend." "Well," she said, turning to me, "are you dumb? . . . Have you nothing to say? . . . Speak." "If I did not say it, Mademoiselle, I dreamed it so vividly that I thought my dream was real." "Ah, the slippery fellow!" exclaimed Ursule. "I know you by that answer." "Was any other answer possible?" She reflected for a moment. "No, I agree; you could hardly have supported my statement to Joséphine's face." "You are amusing yourself at my expense," I whispered, "and it would serve you right if I refuted you by telling the truth." "He persists in what I told you he said," she cried to Joséphine, "and you will not admit it; so I must be his counsel and speak for him. Now then, why are you so unkind?" "I will whisper it," answered Joséphine. I listened attentively, and heard what she said: "When you appeared, he flew to you as though he had been waiting for you. Do you know him?" "Not at all." "How strange! Before that he was talking to me, but I vow he spoke most properly and as one speaks to every girl when one is polite. His behaviour to you has been very different! He looks at you ecstatically, a flame in every glance. . . . But he has come to the wrong person." "Yes, I cannot listen to him, as you know, because I am already pledged. . . ." "Good!" I thought to myself. "Faith, I should have been in a nice mess if my heart had been free! Every pretty girl has something of the flirt in her, and wants to keep the old love while subjugating the new. Love is a game, in which everyone cheats even while trying to play fair."

I had just finished my little monologue when the two girls turned to me again. "I have no answer to that," said Ursule to Joséphine, and then, to me: "But why are we not dancing?" I offered her my hand, murmuring very low: "You can see for yourself that I can love no one but you." "If you were speaking seriously, I would answer seriously; but you are amusing yourself, and I am doing the same. . . . Let us dance . . . Tonton has just told me that you are a famous performer; I love dancing . . . I cannot say how much." We took our places for a country dance, and that completed my subjugation to the beautiful Ursule. Afterwards I danced the *Sabotière*, and the *Matelote*, in appropriate disguise. Tonton, who lent me the necessary things, and Ursule whom I told, were the only people who recognised me; for I had learned these two dances secretly from my Dutch master. While I was dancing the *Matelote*, Loiseau, who had just come in with Maîne Lebègue, Bourgoin and one of the Dlles Huot, suddenly recognised me and began to sing one of M. de Sacy's hymns, persuading the violins to accompany him:

Trust not Society!
It may flatter
Or spatter,
All's wind and no matter:
Be not you caught.
It's hopes and anxiety
All come to nought!
Urbanity
Is but mundanity,
All glittering vanity . . .
Trust not society, etc.

As he had a very agreeable voice he was warmly applauded. I returned to Ursule who welcomed me with enthusiasm. Light accomplishments always make more impression than sterling worth. Her brother had joined her and I greeted him with every imaginable politeness, and was answered in kind. Thus finished the first day. I was as one drunk with pleasure, and awaited the morrow with the greatest impatience.

The party did not reassemble until close on midday, for dinner. The groomsmen, of whom Tourangeot was one, went to fetch the girls; I made myself responsible for Ursule and Joséphine, and the bridegroom accompanied me to their house. We found them ready in full feather, and brought them away in triumph. Ursule's mother, noticing my rapture at the sight of her daughter, said to her son: "Do you know that lad, Joseph?" "Yes, mother; he is a printer, called Monsieur Nicolas; he comes from Sacy, and is engaged to Monsieur Parangon's sister." "And does your sister know this?" "No, mother; I have only just heard it myself from the groom's sister." I hurried Ursule away, expecting that she too would soon be told. "We are both playing the same game," I thought, "and will laugh about it together." I was wrong; her brother did not like Ursule's intended, and told her nothing; and this girl cast so strong a spell about me that I felt it for long after, and can still recover something of its flavour as I reread my note-books. . . .

At dinner I took my place between Ursule and Joséphine, and strove to be equally attentive and polite towards each of them. I venture to say that I made myself pleasant, for my manners were such as I had glimpsed in Paris, seen again in M. Parangon, and observed in certain Parisians who took a meal from time to time in our house; not to mention the example daily set by Loiseau, the most courtly of men with the other sex. This borrowed virtue brought me much credit with my young neighbours, who found my manners admirably superior to those of the men of their own district: not a word that was not a compliment; not a remark of theirs but received a witty interpretation, so that I flattered them more through what they said themselves than by compliments addressed directly to them. In the course of conversation, Ursule remarked to Joséphine: "I do not think that all men are alike. There are some who seem to side with us against themselves, and I think that if that sort of man married a girl he really loved, he would find all his happiness with his adored wife, as does Bourgoin of the *Marinerie*, and pay no attention to anyone but her." "There are only very few girls who can make a man feel like that," answered Joséphine. "There are the couple you have mentioned; and young Thierrat and his cousin, who adore each other just as much after two years of marriage; and . . . you and him." Her conclusion was like a thunderbolt to Ursule. "Oh, but you cannot be sure of that as of something that has already been proved," she stammered. "And then, listen, it must be one's first love." "Is she your first?" Joséphine asked me laughing, and then exclaimed: "He is going to say yes!" But instead of answering as she expected, I first extolled the wit and sentiments of my two fair ones. Then I briefly sketched the story of my love for Madelon, up to my final interview with her. There I stopped. "Ah, but how can you ever look at another girl?" exclaimed Ursule. My answer was to finish the story up to and including my dream on August the 15th. It is impossible to describe with what interest and astonishment the two girls listened. They sat silent and motionless until Tonton came over to tease us about our private talk, drawing everyone's attention to it. We left the table.

We danced in the house after dinner, until an excursion to another bridal celebration, which was being held near Saint-Germain, was proposed by Mlle Guillier, who was a friend of the bride. All the young people hurried there at once, leaving the older men to play and drink. We entered noisily, I between Ursule and Joséphine, ready dressed for my two dances. But first I had a minuet with each of them, the bride having excused herself on the grounds of incompetence. The bridal guests, who had somewhat dispersed, began to gather together again, and I saw with satisfaction that Catherine and her sister Edmée were among them. They did not recognise me, and I resolved not to make myself known. Luckily Tourangeot had not accompanied us. I performed my two dances, and then rejoined my companions, who seemed proud of being with me. However, they were invited to dance, and I found myself at liberty; so I went over to Edmée, who was also disengaged, and, disguising my voice, asked news of Vaux and of a conquest she had made there. She blushed. "You have nothing to blush for," I assured her. "The incident was all to your credit. I know some one who loves and respects you deeply. He is related to your lover of Vaux and proposes to offer you his hand and heart. And he has a brother who is very much attracted by Mlle Catherine. They will declare themselves shortly for they have seen both of you." "And how do you know all this, fine mask?" she asked. "I know it, my Beauty; perhaps some day I will tell you how. . . . I will tell you while dancing . . . dancing at your double wedding." Then I left her, and watched her pointing me out to her sister and relating what had passed. My two Beauties finished their dance, and I took possession of them at once; and we escaped without waiting for the rest of our party. "That was a very pretty girl you were talking to! Do you know her?" "Yes, she is the intended of a cousin of mine." "He is lucky! She is well off and pretty. But he does not belong to the town?" "No, certainly not." "Excellent! Ten years ago old Monsieur Servigné vowed that no townsman should have his daughters. So the elder one has been left, as none but petty vine-growers have asked for her. But the younger one is beginning to attract notice, and prick the interest of suitable lads." This little explanation pleased me, and I told Joséphine that the two sisters were promised to my two cousins, although, at present, this was only understood between Catherine and myself. "I am delighted to hear it," she said.

We were the first back at our own place, and found the violinists drinking. We told them not to disturb themselves for us, but warned them that we were going to be joined by the other bridal party, and that they must do themselves credit. . . . We had not finished speaking before everyone arrived: it was a crush, and Ursule, Joséphine and I kept out of it. I only looked to see whether Catherine and her sister had come, but I learned that they had stayed with their own bride and bridegroom. When the lights were lit, we had in all the sparks and gay women of the town, and as Amatre Guillier and I were well known to all, we did the honours of the wedding.

The tumult stopped for supper. All the strangers disappeared, because any man who remained would have been obliged to pay; as we had ourselves from the evening of the day before, the bride and groom only treating us on the first day. (This custom only held, of course, among people very much of the commonality; even M. Servigné did not follow it.) Ursule was charming during this last act of the festival, in ways and wit and in sweet gaiety. The harmonious and vibrant tones of her voice softened the most savagely brutal; for there were guests of that description. Chance ordained that there should be only one glass for the two of us: "We must resign ourselves," she said, "but you will not want to drink first if you are inquisitive; and as I am superstitious, I do not want to be the first either: what shall we do?" "Let chance decide!" I said. "We will throw for it." "Yes, the highest shall drink first." I fetched two dice, and, for each round, we threw before drinking; and it was nearly always she who had to begin. As she drank little, and her glass, with malicious intention, was filled almost to the brim each time, I was left with two-thirds of it. Then I divined her thoughts, and we found this childish amusement delightful, as did others too. I wove my *divinations* into a continuous speech; but sometimes, after drinking, I would pretend that I did not want to disclose what I had seen, and then Joséphine would question me: "Is it because it is unfavourable to you?" "It is not that; but to reveal . . . aloud . . . the thoughts of so sweet a girl?" "Oh, speak, by all means," answered Ursule. "I do not think that there is anything to be ashamed of in my thoughts." "You must speak, or . . . we shall torment you," exclaimed Joséphine. "I am compelled, Mademoiselle! *I must speak*, as your inquisitive neighbour says. Let us speak then, though grief stifle us." Then, imitating her soft tones, I made Ursule herself speak; I took a mouthful, pretended to listen, then said, in the Fair One's voice: *"Ah, my fine wizard, you would divine my thoughts? Get along with you, I hide them too well."* "Did you think that?" asked Joséphine. "Come, you must tell the truth." "Well, yes . . . something of the sort," she answered. I took a second mouthful: *"This is too much! . . ."* "What, what? What is it?" exclaimed Joséphine. "No, no." "Oh, go on and tell us," said Ursule. "You really want me to? So be it. *This printer, whom I do not know, wants to pay court to me. Poor boy! Does he not know what I am like? Very proud, very haughty, and . . . so enraged against certain men I have heard tell of (for, thank God, I have never encountered such!) who behave badly with women, that if I ever discovered one, there is nothing I would not do to punish him. With what pleasure I should torture him if he had the impudence to fall in love with me!"* Third mouthful: *"I must find out something about this lad. . . . He seems an honest sort of animal; but he may be just a good-for-nothing at bottom. . . ."* Here Ursule burst out laughing. "Is that true?" asked Joséphine eagerly. "I admit that there's some truth in it. . . . Not the bit about the good-for-nothing. . . . How should I know? But the rest." Fourth mouthful: *"Perhaps he thinks my heart is free? Ah, I expected as much! . . . Still, it would be rather amusing to see how* *he will set about it. . . .*" Nearly everyone was listening by this time, and here they all burst out laughing; but Ursule, and even Joséphine, had become serious. M. Parangon was present, and the laughter attracted his attention: "You're enjoying yourselves very much over there." "Ah, Monsieur," answered Joséphine, "if you knew! They have only one glass between them, and toss each time for which shall drink first, and it is always Ursule, because he cheats; and then this gentleman divines everything that is in her mind, and she has the funniest thoughts!" "Yes, but that gentleman is no wizard!" And to avoid comparisons between himself and me, he began to talk to his neighbours. In the meanwhile, Joséphine's glass had been filled, and, as she could not drink it all, I seized and emptied it. Our little circle clapped their hands and urged me to say what was in her mind. I thought for a moment, while leisurely absorbing a few drops left in the bottom of her glass. I was recalling that one day the younger *Jossier of Patagon,* a ballroom acquaintance of whom I have already spoken, had mentioned Joséphine, then a stranger to me, as a girl with whom he was very much in love. I was fairly certain that he would have spoken to her since then; but as I was not quite sure, I took another line. Everyone was waiting for my revelation, so I said solemnly: "Not only can I divine what Mlle Joséphine is thinking, but also what has happened to her through another, and what is going to happen to her." I assumed an inspired air: "Her thoughts are far away from here; no one at this wedding is happy enough to engage them. . . . Heavens, what do I see? . . . A young man, good-looking enough, but small . . . he is rubicund . . . the son of a sailor . . . and is called . . . I must not tell his name . . . I will only say that he is called after one of the greatest of men, and that he has a horse as learned as a schoolmaster. . . . He is looking for her everywhere . . . I see him . . .

I see him! . . ." (My eye was wild) . . . "He has found her! . . . and is overwhelmed with joy. . . . The scene changes . . . I see him praying his little father and his mother, who is as round as a beehive, to go and ask her parents for the hand of his mistress. . . . They set out in their best clothes, made in the hard winter of 1709. . . . There they are, arriving at her home; they enter and look at Joséphine: 'She looks a sweet girl, wife! At least I shall have a pretty daughter-in-law, and she will give us grandchildren as pretty as little Loves or the little cherubim about the altar!' 'Yes indeed, she is very pretty! . . . Where are your dear father and your dear mother, Mamselle?'" (I was imitating the voices of the different speakers.) "'They are upstairs, in the first-floor room, Monsieur and Madame.' 'Could we speak to them?' 'Be so good as to come upstairs. . . .' They go upstairs. . . ." (Here I took a sip of wine. One could have heard a mouse creep.) "I see them. . . . The young man's mother drops a curtsey; his father bows, twisting his hat in his hand. They are repaid in kind. 'M . . . m . . . monsieur and M . . . m . . . madame,' says the father. 'You stammer a little, husband, let me speak. . . . Monsieur and Madame, we are here on behalf of our son, who finds every good quality and perfection in Mamselle your daughter, and has begged us to ask you for her hand in marriage: and that is why we are here. We beg you to give her to him for wife, and to us for daughter-in-law, if you are agreeable. He will have a thousand écus on his marriage-day, and he is an only son.' 'You do us a great honour, Monsieur and Madame,' answers the young lady's mother, 'but our daughter is very young! She is only a child.' 'Ah, Madame, a child who could make plenty more!' says the one father; and the other: 'She was twenty-one yesterday evening, wife.'" (I had heard this during the day.) . . . "'Very good, husband. . . . We would like a week to think it over,' continues the young lady's mother, 'so, until then, Monsieur and Madame. . . .' 'Will you not take a little wine?' interrupts the young lady's father. 'Thank you very much, Monsieur and Madame; but we will drink our first glass together on the day you give us a definite answer.' 'We will come back in a week, Monsieur and Madame,' adds the mother, and they are just going away when the young lady's father repeats: 'But you must take a drop of wine with us to-day!' 'G . . . g . . . good sign, m . . . m . . . my wife,' says the stutterer. So there they are, drinking together, and while they drink, they agree that the two young people are well suited to each other. Such is my divination of what has been, what is and what will be. . . . For . . ." (and I took a sip or two) "I see that the marriage will take place."

I was silent. Everyone was amazed! . . . "You see," I added, "I have told you I know not how many things that I could not possibly have known. . . ." "That is true," said Ursule seriously. Then tongues were unloosed, and everyone began to talk at once; so that no one understood what anyone else was saying any more than when the languages were confounded on the tower of Babel.

"That was very clever," M. Parangon said to me, "and you understand the art of fiction well enough: but you added a touch of satire, and that I do not like." I was just going to answer, when a great booby interrupted: "Oh, isn't it true then? So much the better, because I . . ." He did not finish; a scornful glance from Joséphine stopped him. Ursule asked me in a whisper: "How did you hear that Jossier-Patagon had asked for her hand?" "I really do not know; some one must have told me, for I just remembered it."

After supper, Ursule and I went apart into a corner of the room, as the girl had decided to confide in me. She was beginning to talk about her lover, when we were noticed and called upon to dance. Loiseau had just returned from supper at the house with Bourgoin and the other workmen who had not been invited to the marriage, and was much surprised by my attentiveness to my pretty partner, considering all he knew. While he was talking to me, some young puppy stole away Ursule, and I felt this keenly! But my rival was put in his place directly the country dance was finished, as Ursule came back to me, and spoke so sharply to the young man, a stranger to the party, that he was obliged to leave us. I was overjoyed! Ursule's attitude to me, it seemed, was the same as mine to her; she was attracted to me, and could have loved me had she been free (she admitted as much quite frankly a little later). . . . But we were both engaged. . . . Ah if we could have seen into the future! . . . We should have acted . . . as we did act. The bonds that held me were so strong that for a kingdom I could not have broken them; and when the moment came to renounce all hope of being related to Madame Parangon by ties of brotherhood, I should have thrown up everything, as I did when I had the chance of entering the business of Manon Prudhôt's father. I was less sincere than Ursule, and met her confidences with a half-truth of which Rose was the heroine. Mlle Meslot knew her, as they had been at school together at the Bénédictines, and she congratulated me on my choice; but she added this notable remark: "It needs a very clever man to be Rose's husband!" At the time I took this remark in a complimentary sense, but later I understood its full significance; the rashness of a man who marries a really clever woman seems to me appalling!

While we were talking apart, Ursule's father and brother came into the room, doubtless to take her home. They accosted me politely, and after looking on for a little, M. Meslot said to his daughter: "Say goodbye now to Monsieur; we must be going." I confess that it was with real pain that I watched her go, although her farewell had been the kindest possible: for I felt the necessity of giving up this sweet girl for ever. I found the proceedings intolerable after her departure, so I went to say goodbye to Joséphine: "I am not accustomed to so much noise and excitement, and can stand it no longer. Who is taking you home?" "I ask nothing better than to go now; let us leave quietly together, so that the others will not keep us." I went ahead and waited for her on the staircase; and took her back to her parents. She made no allusion to my magical pretensions on the way; we had only thirty paces to go, so this was all we said: "I never expected to enjoy that wedding," she said, as she took my arm, "and yet I have enjoyed it very much." "And I also, Mademoiselle, I assure you! . . . I shall remember it for a long time, and some of the people I have met at it." "That will be a compliment to the persons you remember." Then we reached our destination, and she bade me goodbye until the following, the bridal, Sunday; and I went home to bed.

Two days later Tonton paid a visit to the printing-room and talked of nothing but Mlle Meslot, even going so far as to say that I loved her. "So much the worse for you! She has a lover already." "I know." "And yet you love her?" "There are some people one loves in spite of one's self." "I can't understand feeling like that." "Nor can I." "I believe you! You remind me of a novel . . . not one of the sentimental sort where they only play at love." "That kind of novel is hardly true to nature." "What would you do if Ursule Meslot had no lover? I dare you to answer. . . . Honestly, my dear boy, men are monstrously ungrateful; they should adore those girls who make no claim on them (no doubt there is some place where they do so), and whose complacence . . . helps them to be faithful." I was very much impressed by this remark. I had heard something about the celebrated Ninon from Loiseau, and thought to myself: "Why should this name always belong to philosophical women? She is quite right." Thus Tonton corrupted not only my senses, but my mind also through the lure of pleasure; for this remark was to make a prodigious impression on me!

We danced again on the bridal Sunday, and all our Beauties were present; but Ursule had been told about me, and did not dance; she only appeared for long enough to make us regret her absence. I consoled myself with Joséphine, one of the most excellent girls that I have ever known, and a second Toinette. At last the bridals were completely finished, and I set myself to forget these two fair girls. I saw them again for a moment on the 2nd of February, at the installation of M. de Condorcet, who succeeded M. de Caylus as bishop of Auxerre. Mlle Meslot gave me a gracious salutation, but she left at the conclusion of the ceremony. Joséphine on the other hand came on to La Maris's ballroom; and this was the last time we danced together. . . .

But I cannot at once take leave of my sweet Meslot: she moved me too deeply for there not to be something about her in my note-books; and I find, in fact, that I wrote some verses to her by way of farewell. These were begun immediately after my conversation with Tonton about her and finished on the 2nd of March: that is to say, at a time when I was apparently devoted to Marianne Tangis, and Ursule and Joséphine, who were friends of hers, were convinced that she had always been the object of my hopes, and that all the other stories were fabrications.

LINES WRITTEN FOR MLLE MESLOT

Seen at the Marriage of Lenclos (1755)

Ah, bitter memory of too blissful moments, it is vain for you to recall those enchanted days when, forgetting everything for two bright eyes, I surrendered my arms to the young Meslot! This divine awakener of my love, wishing to give me back to Marianne, used a generous trick to heal the wound she had inflicted: "Duty bids me repulse your passion, for I am secretly wed; but I know where there is one who loves you with all her heart, and whose gentle nature promises you uninterrupted happiness." "I was not aware of my good fortune," I answered overjoyed. "What! Can the fair Tangis, wooed of so many lovers, look on a wretched man whom the Fair have rejected? You tell me she wishes to make her life happy, by giving me fortune and charms, favours and kindness? I cannot believe it; you are laughing at me, Ursule! I am not such a credulous fool as to believe the flattering intentions you ascribe to Tangis. . . ." Come back to me, sweet memory of Meslot's graciousness! It stirs my senses and brings tears to my eyes. My farewells, after her departure, would have been sad indeed, had not Fourchot lent sweetness to the last few moments.

I have purposely omitted my meeting with Marianne Tangis on the 2nd of February, after I had left Ursule and Joséphine; that same Marianne whom I had caught in my arms on the Ile d'Amour when Annette pushed her. I had escorted her home, and we were seen together by Mlle Meslot's brother. From the 4th of March I became aware of her intense attraction for me, or rather of the high esteem in which I held her; and a happy life might have been founded on our intimacy but for the mocking chance that placed me in a false position. . . . Marianne had sweetly stirred me at our first encounter on the island; and thereafter I was always pleased to see her, but felt no pain on leaving her. Mlle Meslot had made a sharper impression, and I would have loved her with more passion; but Mlle Tangis was calculated to inspire suaver, more enduring sentiments. . . .

And it would be impossible to express the poor child's capacity for swift, whole-hearted attachment! Everything about her bore evidence to love's enchantment, and I was not ungrateful; but, dear Reader, to respond to her sincere and touching affection I should have to have known her two and a half years later. . . . Why was I so loved? Why did Madelon Baron, Manon Prudhôt, Edmée, Colombe, Toinette, Ursule Meslot even, love a poor printer's apprentice? Because I had a soul, and so many men have none! Because women saw and felt that I adored them and, what is worth much more, cherished them even while betraying them. Because I never had the malicious and, in the strict sense, effeminate pettiness to twit them with their weakness; because, though I saw their tricks and shifts and little cruelties (for the fair sex is guilty of such at times) I seemed not to see them, and treated the sweet sinners like spoilt children, covering up their faults and extenuating them; and they in return generously forgave me mine. Because, when they granted me the supreme favour, far from becoming insolent as do other men, I grew more respectful, more considerate, more devoted. Because a woman's secret found inviolable sanctuary in my heart. Because, while caressing and subduing them, I spoke words of tenderest flattery and ones expressive of respectful exaltation. Because I more often fell upon my knees to them to ask pardon for a victory than to try to win one. Reader, I have tried these methods up to the age of fifty-two (1786), and no woman, seriously attacked, has ever resisted me; I have won her, even when she has been forewarned against me; my feeling for her and my expression of it has triumphed over disdain. I have found it thus with women, that they all, without exception, respond to beauty of heart and honest dealing, when these are genuine; they cannot resist a man with sufficient constancy to pursue them, if he knows how to set his snare and has a sensitive soul and lively emotions. And no woman can be accounted guilty when she falls before the attack of a man as sensitively passionate as myself, because it is beyond her natural forces to resist. . . . Therefore never blame women for their failings, for these are our work.

I was speaking of Marianne Tangis whom I met at the cathedral on the 4th of March. I greeted her and we chatted together, and then I escorted her home. But I saw her again at the general procession, on Sunday the 6th of April; she was in the chapel of the Virgin, not the one in the City, but the one near the Saint-Charles Schools, and she was praying devoutly. . . . She made me a sign to kneel beside her. Her prayer was long and apparently earnest; but at last she rose, and gave me the sweetest smile. We left together, and walked down the little streets about *Saint-Pierre-en-Château.* I know not what charm emanated from her every part; but she had that angelic quality which a desire to please seemingly bestows: lending to every movement a something gently gracious; to the voice, a tone which speaks to the heart independently of what is said; to the glance, not less expressive, a tender sweetness; to the walk a something amorous: even the way a woman leans upon your arm, speaks its own language with the rest. . . All this I felt, and thought to myself: "How lovable she is!" My conversation and behaviour reflected my thought, and my manner to her accorded with hers to me. We walked along a road leading down to the edge of the water. Marianne made no effort to direct me, but let herself be gently led. I took her to the *Ile d'Amour* and, on the spot where I had caught her the year before, I kissed her saying: "That is the second in the same place." She blushed without answering; but I thought I felt her hand imperceptibly press mine. A moment later, she said: "There is eleven striking, and that is our dinner-time; my mother will scold me; come."

We went up the *Rue des Terrasses-de-L'Évêché* as far as the street which runs behind Saint-Renobert, at the end of which I left her. I was still watching her retreating figure, when a M. Pochet, whom I had not noticed standing at his parlour window, said to me: "She is really delightful! So clean and neat! She is the prettiest of our butchers' daughters! . . . The man who gets her will not be unlucky; for her parents have the wherewithal!" As I did not belong to the town and would be a stranger to Pochet, I thought it best to say: "She is a relative, Monsieur, and we have just been to see the Bishop's installation." "*Enthronement*, young man! . . . You have a most amiable relative. I thought she was your mistress, although you look like a lad who knows how to behave. That family is much better off than many of our townsfolk who do no work at all. The two sisters will have forty thousand francs each." "She is not for me, Monsieur; for I am promised to another distant relative." He can hardly have heard my answer, as he shut the window after having told me about the dowry; and to this I paid little attention, as I was not thinking of marriage in that connection. Thus I lost yet another woman who loved me, and would have been an excellent match; since, with my ability, my natural economy and my taste for work, less than half that sum would have made my fortune; and still would make it, if I had ten more years to live.

On my return to the house, I sat down to my law books. Sweet Tangis had put me in a most pleasant frame of mind, whereas the feelings roused by Mlle Meslot had been painful and disturbing. I felt dimly that it was a pity I could not fix my affections on Marianne; but, at dinner, the sight of my celestial fairy brought back Mlle Fanchette to mind, and drove out all such new ideas. . . . Thus do blind mortals often take the shadow for the reality.

During the afternoon I felt a desire to see Mlle Tangis again. She did not live in the *Rue de la Boucherie* and her widowed mother's house looked, from the front, like an ordinary middle-class dwelling; counter and shop and all that concerned the business were at the back. Thus she thought it possible that I did not know her circumstances, never dreaming that her cleanliness and something provocative in her way of dressing which is peculiar to her profession, had made me guess this at first sight. Marianne was at her door, with her elder sister and that Maîne Lebègue whose sweet voice Loiseau so adored. . . . I went up to them, and Marianne greeted me with smiling blushes indicative of joy, and a voice that was ill-assured. Her sister, who only knew me by sight, greeted me courteously, and Maîne treated me as a man with whom she was doubly acquainted. I suggested a walk in the *Rue du Champ* (avoiding any mention of the ballroom). "We are waiting for two gentlemen," said the elder Mlle Tangis. "One you know, and the other . . ." "There they are! There they are!" exclaimed Maîne. . . . I looked down the *Rue de la Fricauderie*, and saw Loiseau with *Lacour*, a tall young man whom I had met from time to time at the ballroom; he had two colossal sisters, who were friends of the Dlles Ferrand. "I know both of them, Mademoiselle," I said to Marianne's sister. "Sister, he knows Monsieur Lacour!" cried the younger; and I noticed that she spoke with perceptible emotion. "Excellent," said the elder, "then Monsieur will join our party?" "Will he!" cried Maîne. "Why Monsieur Loiseau is his best friend." This was not actually the case; but her words were prophetic. . . . "Hallo, friend Nicolas!" exclaimed Loiseau, catching sight of me. "What lucky chance brings you here?" *"A physical cause,"* I replied smiling. "Which is . . . ?" "The potent virtue of the lodestone." "A pretty thought," said Lacour, "with two meanings, and both of them gallant. . . . I would like to know to whom we owe it." "Need you ask?" said Maîne. "There are two of you, and three of us" (with an imperceptible gesture towards Marianne). "Oh, that's quite simple!" exclaimed Lacour. "Where shall we go, Mesdemoiselles?" he continued. "I warn you that we shall have to go down the *Rue des Cornes*, disagreeable as it is, because my sisters are waiting for us by the water's edge, behind *Saint-Pèlerin.*" "In that case," said Mlle Tangis, "there is no need to ask where to go." And she took her lover's arm. Loiseau took Maîne, and Marianne was left to me; and we went through the quarter in this order. An apothecary's lad called to Lacour. Neighbours of both sexes were gathered in front of apothecary *Jeannet's* shop, and, while we were waiting, I heard them discussing us. "He's a lucky fellow, if he gets that little girl." "He will get her; for they were together this morning too." "He is a stranger," said a woman. "Naturally; they have all the luck . . ." answered an old woman, whose son was sitting beside her, a great booby whom even the elder Tangis could not endure. "Do you know," said another old lady, "that she will have fifteen thousand francs more than her brother and sister, through her grandmother Hérissé, who thought Marianne was like her? . . ." I marvelled that Marianne should have this in common with Fanchette. I lost the rest of the conversation, as the young chemist finished what he had to say to Lacour, and we continued our walk. . . . What I had just heard did not make much impression on me: I wanted no wife but Fanchette, and only took any pleasures that offered, even those of the heart, in passing. I was right in a sense, as I thereby avoided a too great assiduity within doors, where I had to steer a course between equally dangerous rocks . . . and, as there was nothing in them, I could console myself without scruple.

We found the Dlles Lacour with Marianne's brother and a bookbinder named *Destroches*, who were their sweethearts, so we made a gay party. We crossed the Yonne, and had something to eat at the farms, where wine was provided for the men. This excursion was all the pleasanter in that nothing unbecoming occurred. I have already made the observation that men behave with great restraint when in the company of girls whom they are honestly seeking in marriage. . . . They speak and act as though under their mothers' eyes. Loiseau was a good man, and the others were sober-minded; as for me, with my natural love of goodness, I probably savoured this decent entertainment more than a thoroughly virtuous man, because I had experience of something different. Also it must be admitted that Marianne's character and face, her manner and chaste conversation, made it an exquisite pleasure to be virtuous with her. Moreover my conduct won me the esteem of her sister and brother, and of the rest of the company. For chance brought it about that a conversation between us was overheard. Marianne had gone out with Maîne, and the latter came back alone. A moment later, I made some pretext for going out too. Everyone watched me quite unaffectedly, not having the least doubt that I was going to join Marianne. And I did join her, but she was not alone. She was picking narcissi and violets and wild lilies of the valley with the dairyman's daughter. We returned together slowly. Two paces from the ground-floor parlour, where everyone was sitting, we stopped to talk. Up till then I had been paying compliments to Marianne, and when we were within earshot, I said: "You are pretty, but that is not your greatest attraction; there are plenty of young ladies in the town as beautiful as you, who yet are not sought after; it is the angelic character which is legible upon your features and in your eyes. No one who knows you, whether man or woman, can help loving you; because your expression guarantees happiness and sweet solace in your society! Happy the mortal who shall win you for his companion! His tranquil days will run their equable course, undisturbed by shocks or vicissitude! . . . I say nothing of your virtue, which I honour as much as I respect your character, for that is an indispensable duty; yet how enviable is the man who is sure of it in his companion! You are a treasure, charming girl! May you find a husband capable of appreciating you as I should!" "Ah, never, Monsieur Nicolas, for no one has ever said anything . . . so agreeable to me!" "That is because no one has taken the liberty to speak so freely." "Oh, yes. . . . But I am very pleased that no one has said that before." Then the girl who had been carrying the posies came out again: "Let us go in," she said, taking my hand. "Come."

Our entry was greeted by friendly smiles from everyone. The elder Mlle Tangis and her brother unaffectedly made much of me, and kept on saying the kindest things; while the elder Mlle Lacour, Tangis's mistress, seemed anxious to outdo even Marianne's brother and sister. Loiseau was delighted, though he looked a little surprised: the honest fellow could not understand how Fanchette Collet's intended could be the virtuous lover of a girl he was not in a position to marry! My Spanish proverb* had not given him the key to my conduct; but there is nothing surprising about it to you, Reader. I was flying from a cherished idol, and from a girl who seduced my senses; and with sweet Tangis I found pleasure which left no remorse, a kind of pleasure which I have always exquisitely enjoyed. Ah, I was laying up for myself a treasure of regrets! Like our young nobles, who dissipate their fortune before possessing it, I was accumulating moral and physical experiences, glutting myself with them, and so preparing the way for that frightful penury I was to feel one day! . . .

*Quien canta, sus males espanta.

Cream cheese and spinach pie, milk and wine: such was our food and drink. . . . After we had satisfied the appetite which youth so easily acquires, we sang. The Dlles Lacour had voices commensurate with their stature. They sang:

All's laughter for the lover;
E'en in his gentle sighs
He ever will discover
His sweetest pleasure lies.
Dear birds, you saw the glorious
Triumph I garnered here!
Applaud me as victorious
In every rival's ear.
Applaud-laud-laud me victorious
In every rival's ear!

Then the younger sister sang the second verse of a song familiar to all of us:

A thousand graces winningly
All his words and actions season;
And when I yield, persuaded by
The arguments he rests his pleas on,
Methinks I only bow to reason:
But if his purpose I should fear
In showing me such tenderness,
He humours me, restores my cheer,
Plays on my mood with great address.

The elder Mlle Tangis sang a very old-fashioned air in a very old-fashioned way. Here is one verse of it:

In all the village 'tis agreed
No shepherd is before him:
His every word, his every deed
Compels you to adore him.

When I chose him from his rival throng
He never left to chant me,
For to enchant me,
Some new little song.

She was looking at her lover. Loiseau looked at Marianne: "Ha, ha, ha," he laughed, "I know the next verse, which gives to think:

But ah! Another has his heart,
And my poor heart is stifled!
He was my mate, all mine apart;
He never teased or trifled!
When I chose him from his rival throng
He never left to chant me,
For to enchant me,
Some new little song."

Her lover admired both the words and air of Julienne Tangis' song, and asked her to give them to him.

Marianne chose a new and pleasing song, *Fleurettes*; her voice was sweet and melodious, but shy.

The charms of another Fair
Lie all in her simple heart:
Bring her no gifts so rare;
You'll win her not by art.
Offer her ribands and sweet ditties;
A heart is often melted by
Such little pretties.

(CLXXVII *Contemp.*)

Not one of our comediennes or ballad singers or affected ariettists has ever equalled Marianne's rendering of this song: it could not have been better or more graceful, especially in the difficult verse:

Because she would beware
Of bonds not lightly broken,

Temira does not dare
Accept her shepherd's token.
But Tircis ready of his wit is
And all her scruples puts to rout:
"What! All this fluttering about
Such little pretties?"

This was sung with a subtle art that delighted us. Every girl's mind quickens when her heart is touched.

Then it was Maîne Lebègue's turn. She preluded, and I was ravished by the brilliance of her voice. . . . When, later, the actress *Fel's* melodious singing enchanted my ears I compared her voice with Maîne's, and the latter's rang more silvery clear. *Laruette* came near to her, but I only utterly refound her in that young artist *Renaud*. . . . Maîne was famous already for her beautiful voice, as we know. First she gave us two grand airs, which were familiar to everybody:

O garden graced by Nature and Art,
Worthy of Flora's self! Your witchery
Takes me not; yet this little to admire is!
Fair spot, 'tis love, love, love possesses me,
And nothing here's so fair as is my Iris!

This is the eulogy of the *Tuileries*, which made such a great sensation when it was sung for the first time from amongst the bosky groves. Then she gave us:

Tranquil wood, delicious orchard

from the opera *Églé*. She ravished our ears, and I may say without hyperbole, that she had the most beautiful voice in the world. Loiseau, an excellent critic, was in an ecstasy; he had heard his mistress's gift extolled as I had, but he had never expected such flexibility, such compass, such brilliance, all managed with the taste of a really gifted woman. He begged her to sing again, saying that he could never weary of listening to her. "My friends," he said, "I little knew that I was to have a repast worthy of the Farmer-General!" Then Maîne gave us a very old song:

Nightingales, whose pleasant winging
Stirs the woods' echo day and night,
Be quiet and respect the singing
Of the shepherdess, my delight;
Though you might so well be jealous,
Do not interrupt her glee;
Amphion's less than you, but, tell us,
Surely you are less than she?
Sur-urely you-ou are less than she?

After this admirable song, Loiseau, wanting to hear her beautiful voice in some air innocent of embellishments or flourishes, asked her to sing a perfectly simple cantilena.

Love did ne'er interest me
In virginhood sealed;
But Colin so pressed me
And forced me to yield.
He takes my hand:
I don't understand!
I am all in a flurry and pother!
I try to hide and run away:
But he follows me, follows me alway!
What can I do to stop him, say?
There was none to help me, mother!
There was none to help me, mother!

And she sang this simple, even trivial, air deliciously.

"Ah," exclaimed Marianne, when Maîne had finished, "how I should love to have such a beautiful voice!" "You have a smaller compass," I replied, "but your voice is more touching." A sweet smile was my reward.

Maîne Lebègue's father had ruined himself, but her grandfather was René Lebègue, chief constable and one of the handsomest and most upright men of his time. Her mother, *Germaine Guigner* of *Quennes*, had been as unhappy as she was beautiful; her misfortunes, known through all the countryside, were the work of a dissolute husband. *René Lebègue*, apothecary and doctor, was Maîne's paternal uncle, a handsome, witty man, and well-to-do; but he died so miserably that no one knew what became of him. *Agnès Lebègue* was her cousin; she was about sixteen at this time, but I had never met her, and do not remember ever seeing her during my apprenticeship. Finally *Agnès Couillard* was her aunt, a bad woman who grieved her husband, ruined him, drove him into exile, and then dissipated what remained of his fortune. We shall see in the course of time how close was to be my relation with all these persons.*

It was growing late, and when the songs were finished, we rose to leave, and strolled back two by two, along the water's edge. As we stepped on to the bridge I caught sight of Edmée Servigné with her father and her sister, walking back from one of their vineyards which they had been inspecting. "There is a most excellent friend of mine," I said to the others, "and I wish we had met him on the way out." "I know who he is," said Lacour, "it is Père Servigné! You are right, he is a good man." "And I know his younger daughter," said Marianne. "We learnt to read together at the *Providence*, where her god-mother boarded." On this I hailed the vine-grower. "Ah, it is you," he said. "We see nothing of you these days!"

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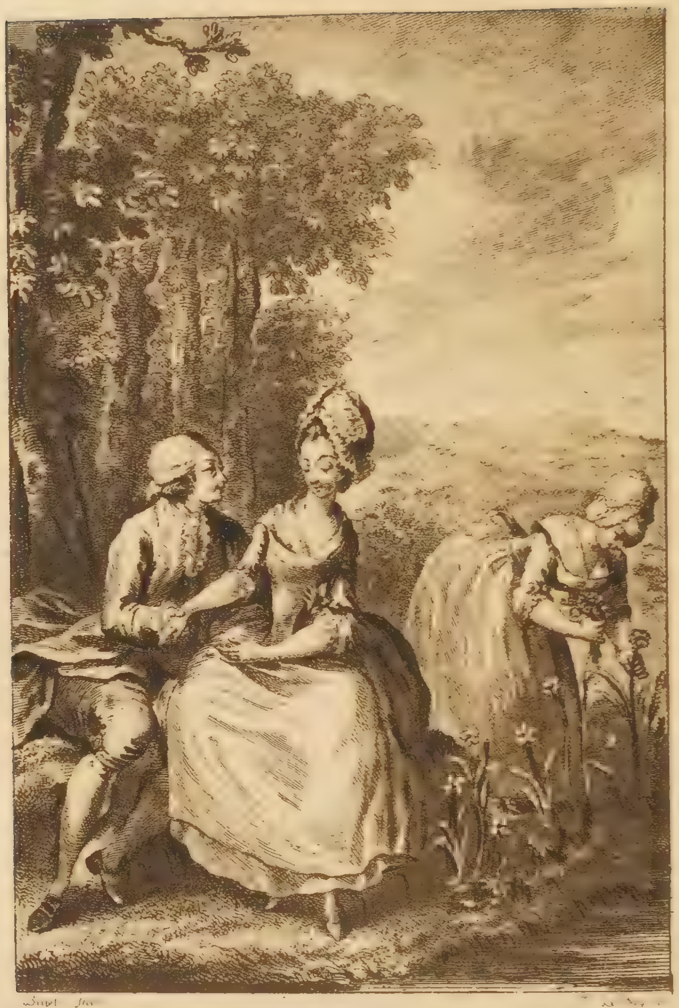
*Agnès Lebègue was Restif's future wife. Her father, René Lebègue, was highly esteemed and the circumstances which caused his ruin in later life were, as Restif narrates in due course, entirely honourable to him. He died shortly after his daughter's marriage. [Ed.]



"But, with your permission you will see me again soon," I replied, "and in good company." I looked at Catherine, and she said: "You will be very welcome; but you never come to see us now: that is to stand too much upon your dignity!" Edmée and Marianne were walking in front, renewing their acquaintanceship: they were perfection in dress and cleanliness, each according to their different costumes, and I remarked to my companions and to Catherine and her father: "Tell me, could one find a pleasanter sight than those two young girls in front of us?" "I do not know how it happens," said Loiseau, "but he knows all the prettiest people in town, from coronet to plough." He said this because, one evening, he had seen me talking to the Provost's wife, a tall woman, with all the dainty charm of a pretty Parisian; she was the sister of Mme de Pontagny, wife of the sub-Delegate. The interview came about as follows: some days previously I had met her daughter with her maid and the cook in the Maladière meadows, all three terrified by a herd of cows, and I had carried the little girl, who was about ten years old, through the herd. The two women thanked me most warmly, and next day, when the young lady was sitting with her mother in the porch, she saw me pass, and exclaimed: "Mamma, there is my *good friend.*" "*Your good friend?* What do you mean?" "Yes, Mamma; that is the man who saved me from the cows, and when he had driven them away I said: 'Thank you, good friend.' . . .! My maid scolded me, and told me I ought to say 'Monsieur.' . . ." "Your maid was right." "But she was not, Mamma, because the young man said: 'Ah, do not grudge me that charming title! It does not matter at Mademoiselle's age. . . . Thank you, pretty little lady. That is the pleasantest word that has ever charmed my ears!'" Surprised by these words, the lady called me. She began by thanking me for the service I had done her daughter; then she asked me various questions about my profession and my family. I told her about my father, and my brother at Courgis, whom she knew, and of what I was doing in the town; and finished with a fine eulogy of Madame Parangon, which brought me great credit with her. . . . Such was my interview with the Provost's wife, which Loiseau had chanced to see: doubtless he noticed how graciously she took leave of me; and that I kissed the child's hand, and the hem of the lady's tea-gown. The latter remarked to her daughter: "The first men in our town have not the manners of this young printer."

"He is at home everywhere," answered M. Servigné. "He is simple with me out of good nature, and intellectual with you, and I am sure that you must be fond of him." "Oh, good old man," exclaimed Loiseau, "how I love you for speaking thus of my comrade and my friend!" Catherine listened marvelling. . . . However, the two girls were still walking on ahead, so we followed after them, the men in one group, and the girls in another. We took the ladies back to the Dlles Tangis' house, where Edmée was remaining with the rest, and there we separated. The old man went home with Catherine (who would not leave him), quite delighted with all the compliments that had been paid to his youngest daughter. Tangis and Lacour did not stay, but went on to pass the evening with their usual circle at a sort of club, without troubling about supper. Loiseau and I went home; and I withdrew alone to write down in my note-books everything that had happened, trying to forget nothing.

When I came down again at eight o'clock, I found Toinette and Loiseau together; apparently they had been talking about me, for they smiled on seeing me. Loiseau went out to have a chat with M. Bourgoin and left me alone with Toinette. I was just as affectionate to her as though I had fewer distractions elsewhere. In the course of conversation I showed some anxiety about her condition, after what had passed between us, but she reassured me a little sadly. "Those who are afraid . . . are caught, whereas I . . . who would have liked . . ." I must conceal nothing. I had been virtuous all day and had enjoyed it; but finding myself in the evening with a girl who had already yielded to me . . . desire awoke, and I showed this with my usual vehemence. Toinette gave way. Afterwards she said something . . . that I shall never forget: "I feel that I am doing wrong. . . . And yet why? . . . We are still free . . . and I promise that if ever . . . I cease to be so . . . only one man shall ever have from me . . . what I have given to the most lovable. . . . Ah, that he could make me what I desire to be!" "And what is it that you want to be, dear girl?" "I will tell you some day. . . ." Great ones of the earth, say, were you as fortunate in youth as this son of a penniless working farmer?

Only once more was I in the same party with Marianne Tangis. The occasion is not described in my note-books; but I called it *perjucunda.* As far as I remember, this party was even more agreeable than the first. All those who had taken part in the latter were present, together with some others of their young friends. One of these openly declared himself my rival, and I modestly gave place to him. Marianne took alarm, and came to me of her own will, with the most flattering marks of preference. . . Loiseau was watching us. Her behaviour pleased my vanity at the time, and I enjoyed my triumph. But a moment's reflection brought me to reason, and I saw that I was in danger of behaving in a way that was not to Marianne's advantage; so I decided to break insensibly with her, and to achieve this with more success and less suffering, to renew my friendship with Rose. So I took my insolent rival apart. He suspected other reasons for this, and everyone else was of his opinion. "Listen," I said. "I know that you are the favoured one," he interrupted, "but . . ." "Not so many . . . impertinent buts. I have something to say to you. I have your permission to speak?" He listened. "If I were sure that you were able to make Mlle Tangis happy, I should retire at once; but you seem to me very conceited and something of a blusterer. I do not like that kind of man, so you displease me . . . that is, unless you can prove that I am mistaken about you?" "You have a curious way of expressing yourself!" "Not at all curious; I am honest, and say what I think: it is for you to see what answer you can make." "Anyone would think that it was for you to dispose of Mlle Marianne's person! Yet you are neither her father, nor her mother, nor even her brother." "That is true; but I am something, and that something gives me considerable weight! . . . I desire Mlle Marianne's happiness as I desire my own; she is the sweetest girl in the town. But I am not capable of making her happy: I am not rich enough, I have no position, and if she wanted to have me as I am, I would not consent; for I love her for herself, and as though she were a dearly loved sister. . . ." My heart swelled with tenderness as I spoke, and tears flowed in spite of myself. The young coxcomb was moved: "Ah, what are you doing? Are you as honest as you say?" "You insult me," I answered. "Do you think that I weep for fear of you?" "No, no, that was not my meaning." "If you are worthy of Marianne, you shall have her; at least as far as I am concerned; I shall not oppose it; but if you do not understand her worth, I will tear your heart out first. Let her get to know you; and we shall see what happens. Farewell." I turned away abruptly, and he followed, docile as a lamb, to the astonishment of everyone. He approached Marianne from time to time, but only when I was away; the moment I came back, he gave up his place. I acted on my resolution, and was attentive to Rose in the meanwhile; for I needed more than one object for my affections: a single one, such as Madame Parangon or Toinette, was too dangerous. But it must have cost me a grievous struggle, for I do not speak openly of it in my note-books: I can only find a note on the day after this last party: *"Delectatio heri perjucunda! sed quid sit sequutum, taceo; scitis, Dii boni! . . ."*

So I turned my attention to Rose: and it is with her that I shall for the time be occupied. . . . Although we scarcely ever saw each other now, she had by no means given up her pretensions in my regard; and we shall see how adroitly she managed to assert these once the fine weather returned and multiplied occasions for appearing at her door. When I had finally decided to break with Marianne, I plunged into a whirl of boisterous pleasures. Also I threw myself into my work with a kind of frenzy, but I was too active for this to occupy me entirely. . . . Unlucky that I was, even work could not entirely save me from the vices of idleness! . . . I was by no means guiltless; but it seemed as though occasions for vice came to me, without my seeking. And the following is one of my most shameful episodes, considering the time and my position.

One day in April I had gone up to my boarded-off closet at the end of the loft, and, before going downstairs again, the fancy took me to look out of the window which looked over the court and outer garden of the Cordeliers. I was admiring the budding flowers and the beauty of the new green, when I heard steps behind me. It was Toinette with Marote, whom we already know as the young and pretty chambermaid of the Dlles Baron. . . . They had been hanging up the linen, and did not see me. I was curious to overhear their chatter. "Those are Mlle Madelon's chemises," said Marote. "They have not been worn since her death; her sisters are afraid to use them." "They are very good!" said Toinette. "If they would only give them to me," answered Marote, "I would wear them all right. . . . You have some one here who loved her dearly, and whom she loved dearly too!" *Toinette.* "Ah, Monsieur Nicolas?" *Marote.* "Yes. . . . He used to write her letters. . . . Oh, he is very clever! . . . They rhyme like a song." *Toinette.* "He teaches writing very well!" *Marote.* "He has taught you, hasn't he?" *Toinette.* "Yes; and so well, for I have such a thick head I never could manage to learn, and with him it comes by itself." *Marote.* "You are lucky!" *Toinette.* "Not so very!" *Marote.* "Why, not so very?" *Toinette.* "Oh, I understand what I mean." *Marote.* "And suppose I understood too, Toinette, then we should both understand, shouldn't we?" *Toinette.* "Certainly, but what business is it of yours?" *Marote.* "Well . . . one always likes to know everything." *Toinette.* "Do not be inquisitive, my friend; that is safest." *Marote.* "Oh, safe or not, I am as inquisitive as anything! . . . Tell me why, not so very?" *Toinette.* "It will take you a lot further if I tell you! . . . Suppose one grows fond of a person in spite of one's self?" *Marote.* "Oh, is that all? But that's fine! . . . Now I want to get fond of some one, just to see what it is like. For my poor dear mistress, who is no more, told me it was very sweet!" *Toinette* (to herself). "And very bitter!" *Marote.* "I can well believe that, for I caught her weeping two or three times, Toinette. . . . You are right, my girl! . . . But what harm does that do? One only weeps sometimes; and I still want to know what it is like."

While I was listening attentively to the two girls, my eyes wandered from time to time over the outer garden of the Cordeliers, and presently I noticed something moving behind the sheaves or bundles of vine twigs stacked in the cloister. I was trying to make out what it was, when a pile of faggots toppled over, and there without concealment was . . . Gaudet d'Arras, who had returned from Troyes two or three days ago to find his wife ill, with Goton, Mlle Hollier's chambermaid! . . . They were in the grip of love . . . (d'Arras had bought this garden for his lifetime; it has since reverted to a certain Raffin). I was ravished by this sight; it threw me into a delirium of voluptuous ecstasy. . . . But what could I do? . . . There were two of them! . . . I called Toinette, and the two girls gave little frightened screams. Then, recognising my voice, they joined me. The Flemish window was divided into two by a beam: I had hoped to get rid of Marote by saying that some one had called her; but the little rogue had seen what I was looking at, and her eyes were glued on the same object; she took possession of the other half of the window. I put Toinette in my place, though she wanted to go downstairs instead of her friend. . . . I did not know what I was doing. . . . One could not see clearly what was happening in the garden and the actors were unrecognisable; but Toinette had her suspicions, and started to withdraw. Then I caught hold of her and, perceiving my intention, she went back to the window. I made an attempt on her there, but she took precautions against me. In the meanwhile Marote was devouring the confused objects with her eyes. "Come and see!" she cried. "Come and see what I am looking at!" Toinette put her head out of the window, and Marote pointed. . . . I was mad with desire. I longed to throw myself on Toinette. . . . But how expose her in front of Marote? . . . While I was in this frantic state, the inquisitive Marote began to wriggle, working her buttocks into a thousand attitudes, and one was so voluptuous that I could not resist it. Imperceptibly I raised her clothes to her hips, and, measuring my distance, attacked her so brusquely that I triumphed over her virginity, and she uttered a cry of pain! . . . "Be quiet!" I whispered, holding her so tightly that she could not move. "Help me, and you will enjoy it. . . ." She was so much moved that she could not speak. . . . Her knees failed beneath her at the approach of a new sensation, and she yielded utterly. I held her up. . . . At last she stammered out: "Toinette! . . . Come to me, come to me! . . ." Toinette, who, in spite of herself, could not take her eyes from the garden, did not understand and I came to victory. Then Marote, quite carried away, let her face fall upon the window sill, and so the sacrifice was completed. . . . Marote remained without movement for some minutes, and only came to herself when I had renewed the attack. . . . When this was finished, she stood up at once and went back to the linen, covered with shame and in a state of disorder which made her a thousand times more provocative.

Toinette at last gave her attention to her companion and, seeing that she was no longer there, turned away from the window in a state of emotion which she strove in vain to conceal. She found herself close to me; we were hidden by the linen; I kissed her. "Ah, let me go!" she murmured. As she spoke, Berdon called, and Marote went downstairs. I ran after her, and kissed her, whispering: "Don't tell!" "Ah, you wicked man! I know one must not even talk about things like that; but you, you do them." She ran downstairs, and I went back to Toinette, who had returned to the window. I looked out, and saw Gaudet d'Arras standing up and chaffing Goton. Some tall elms, just breaking into leaf, prevented him from seeing us, and he thought that they were an equally efficient screen for him. I coughed and, recognising me by that, he suspected that I was warning him, and they disappeared. I left my post, and seized Toinette, who let herself be led unresisting to my pallet. There I possessed her with an enthusiasm that would have removed any suspicions she might otherwise have had; and this is what I intended, and also to keep her silent when her friend returned.

. . . Toinette had never given herself so completely: her transports surpassed even mine. Yet it was she who heard Marote returning. Like a flash she was up and out of the closet, which luckily was hidden by the linen from Marote, who had already entered! . . . I followed Toinette and, catching hold of her skirt, pulled her a little way down the stairs, and made her come up again noisily: "A little subterfuge when reputation is at stake," I whispered. She entered the loft alone, but I took good care not to miss the chance of hearing what they said to each other, and whether any confidences were exchanged. . . . It was a waste of time. The two girls, who had chattered so busily only an hour before, had lost their tongues; they worked in silence, one at one end of the loft, and the other at the other. Then I heard Bardet coming upstairs, and was obliged to leave my hiding-place. I went to do some work. . . . About a quarter of an hour later, Bardet came to me at my case, and whispered: "I have just been helping Toinette and Marote to take down the linen. I don't know what is the matter with them, but they won't say a word, and tears are running down their cheeks. . . . They are not crying together; because one does not know that the other is doing it. When they saw that I had noticed, Toinette pretended to laugh, and Marote repeated two or three times: 'Faith, what a lot of smoke there is in here! Go on to the roof, and see where it is coming from, Monsieur Bardet.' And she rubbed her eyes. Ah, I would give half my life to save Toinette any pain."

I was distressed by the suffering I had caused these two children, and at half-past eleven I went upstairs. They were folding up the linen, Marote at my window, and Toinette at the one overlooking the Cordeliers. "Your eyes are all red!" I said to the former. "Do not grieve, pretty Marote! I guarantee that you are still what you were when you arrived here this morning; I did not succeed." "Ah, if I were only certain!" "I give you my word of honour!" and the young girl believed me on this oath. . . . Oh, simplicity of innocence, what remorse have I not earned through you! . . . My conduct had not been premeditated; the spectacle of Gaudet d'Arras with Goton had moved me to such frenzy that I would have used violence with anyone who had happened to my hand. . . . Marote, her work finished, went away comforted, and I joined Toinette.

"I do not know what is the matter with Marote," she said. "She must have seen something as she came in; she is so sulky and stand-offish with me! . . . Ah, Monsieur Nicolas! . . . But no recriminations! . . . The only thing I am afraid of is the harm it may do to you. . . . However, if anything happens, you may be sure that I will look after you and take all the blame: for even now you do not know all that your pupil would do for you; she can honestly say that your happiness is her own, and that she watches over it in every possible way. . . . But I think I hear Bardet coming to fetch me. I will finish this later. Go away now." "Have no fears about Marote," I said. "I know what was on her mind. . . . I will talk to you later." Bardet's last remark when he was talking to me about Toinette made me want to see how he would behave with her. He found her ready to come downstairs. He took her hand, but she withdrew it. "You are in trouble?" he asked her. "No, no," she answered smiling. "But I saw you weeping!" "You must have dreamt it!" "Ah, dear Toinette, will you marry me some day? . . . I am an orphan, and my own master, and I love you!" "You are too young." "I am small, but I am seventeen; and you cannot have Nicolas: you know that?" They were going downstairs, and Toinette's only answer was to stroke his cheek lightly; he took and kissed her hand, but she withdrew it again.

During the afternoon I rejoined Toinette in the loft. "Finish what you were saying about Marote," she said. "She knows nothing; I am sure of that; so do not compromise yourself by asking her questions. I have discovered everything. She thinks her honour tarnished by having watched . . . the scene in the garden . . . and she is ashamed of having called you. She said something to me about it before going downstairs, and I was obliged to reassure her." Toinette believed me, as had Marote, and in a much less likely statement. I kissed my pretty friend, and felt even more disposed than in the morning to ravish favours for which I was insatiable. She perceived this, and said: "I do not want it; but do not imagine that I have the strength to resist you! I am so weak that I could never do so, were it not for the thousand fears that trouble me: Madame Parangon might come up to inspect the linen; Bardet, who watches me unceasingly, might catch us; you might be needed, and some one be sent here to fetch you. . . . I do not know if I am committing a deadly sin; God sees into my heart, and I protest that there is nothing vicious in it. . . . And yet the thought of offending him terrifies me as much as the harm I might do to your reputation if we were caught. . . . Dear Master, I love you too well, I feel it. . . . I feel it more and more every day, . . . if I were not offending against God . . . I should rejoice in feeling it. . . ." I tried to relieve her of remorse with my philosophy, but she said: "Leave me my pains and my pleasures. I could say of myself what I heard Madame say one day: *My soul is too susceptible not to have need of a God, placed as I am.* . . . I have a wonderful example before me, but I follow it very imperfectly. Still I follow it in one thing." (Oh, this girl! She was a second Colette, I verily believe . . . only differently educated.) . . . With tears in my eyes, I said: "What have I done that Heaven should make me at once as happy and as unhappy as I am! Why, ah why, am I not a being without ties like Jean Lelong? Then I would find happiness with my Toinette, and she would have no difficulty or scruple about accepting me. . . . Simple-hearted and virtuous girl! Never again call me master, for in one moment, you have taught me more than I have ever taught to you. How worthy are you of your mistress! Here and now I protest my respect for you, Mlle Toinette; this is the sentiment I owe to you, the one I vow to you . . . and never will you see me abjure my oath." "No, you will never abjure it," she said, "or you would cease to be yourself. Simple girl as I am, I know you as well as you know yourself. You are ardent and your passions carry you away; but you are neither insolent nor brutal nor ungrateful. In the misfortune of losing a maid's estate, I could not have been luckier; I mean what I say, I could not have been luckier even if I did not love you." "Oh, my dear," I exclaimed, "may bitter affliction wither up my heart, if ever I forget you. I shall never be your husband – you know that as well as I do myself – but I will be your brother and your friend to the last breath of my life!" "There," she said, giving me a kiss, "that is for making me so happy by saying those two words." I kissed her tenderly many times, but in brotherly fashion: she had calmed all those tumultuous passions which the sight of Gaudet d'Arras with Goton had raised to frenzy in the morning. . . . But it must be admitted that I had another and a weighty reason for self-control: I could see that Bardet was head-over-ears in love with Toinette, and I began to consider myself the most criminal of men for risking the latter's chance of an honourable establishment, and for abusing my friend by knowingly enjoying his future wife. This was the last time that I ever possessed Toinette. I left her to return to work. . . .

Such was the crisis at which I had now arrived, such my state of mind, and such were my associates, all of whom have been more fortunate than

I, because their hopes were lower. As for Toinette, I am unperjured in her regard, I love her more to-day, the 28th of August, 1794, than I loved her then. I cherish, bless and mourn her; and not her alone, but all those other women I have called friend in this exact and searching *Anatomy of Myself.*

In the evening I was one of the witnesses to the declaration of Gaudet d'Arras' marriage – not to the actual marriage contract. During a moment of private conversation, I gave him to understand, without saying it in so many words, that I had recognised him that morning: "It was I all right," he said, "under the cowl of Saint Hermine. I took to it again to excite my lubricity with Goton; it seems to me I am more vigorous or more wanton when frocked." His words displeased me: he had never spoken with so little decency. Nevertheless it encouraged me to reproach him as the cause of my assault on Marote. He fell upon my neck, exclaiming: "Splendid, my dear fellow! And if she conceives, I shall be half responsible and will look after the child. . . . As for my adventure this morning, what would you? You know how one is dominated by what is actually present at the moment? Mlle Hollier sent her chambermaid to try to put a stop to my marriage (already an accomplished fact) by the fairest offers, and it amused me to answer the maid as I did, without uttering a single word, and to beg her to give this answer (or as much of it as was left in her) to her pretty mistress. . . . And so she can for all I care. . . ." Such was the attitude of a man whose natural goodness had been corrupted during a long sojourn with the monks. Some days later he took his wife to a town in Flanders, where he afterwards became a parliamentary councillor. Thus Manon was lucky far beyond her hopes. We wrote to each other from time to time until my most grievous loss befell me . . . after that he forgot me; or it was I. . . . Yes, it was I; for his last letter was never answered, and he did not know where to find me. When I began to write, he did not recognise me as *La Bretonne*, the name under which I hid myself; but he suspected my identity in the *Pornographe*, and was certain of me in the *Paysan Perverti.* He was coming to my rescue in Paris, two months after the *Paysan* had appeared (1776), fell ill at Valenciennes, and died at a village two leagues from there. . . . When he read the *Paysan Perverti,* he said: "At last he has realised my hopes; alone and unhelped he has done it. Ah, if only *she* were alive! . . . I will not write to him; but I will go and find him. . . ." But my bad luck (for my luck was changed by then) would not permit it . . . and thus, despite sincerest friendship, I was always to be unfortunate. . . . And here I pay a tearful tribute to my dear Gaudet d'Arras! With what pleasure I should see him now! With what joyful outpouring I would read him this, my most important published work; but he is no more. . . . O d'Arras! with you and with your wife, who could not survive your death, I lost everything. With you, I was exempt from suffering and all necessity; without you, I languish miserably, at the mercy of rogues and cheats, whom I dare not even name until the end of my last *Epoch.* . . . And about his vices, some one asks? . . . And about mine? and yours, my Reader? Do they prohibit self-respect and prevent us from reaching upwards to the Source of Life, into whose breast has fallen d'Arras? . . .

At this time I had a business in hand which occupied me sufficiently to take me out of myself, make me forget Marianne, keep me away from Toinette, and prevent me from falling back into all the disastrous aberrations of my passion for Colette. We come to a long and detached episode.

I had never lost sight of my plan for the marriage of my two maternal cousins to the sisters Servigné. But the brothers Mairat had been occupied with business which had to be despatched before they could think of settling down. Madame Parangon was acquainted with them and respected their parents; though they were poor enough, for their father, who had married my mother's eldest sister, was only a simple day labourer, in the haulage and stacking of firewood for transport to the Capital. My grandfather had bestowed his ugly eldest daughter on this man for excellent reasons: after the fire, which had destroyed everything in his house, including his title deeds, Nicolas Ferlet had been very poor himself; his eldest daughter was industrious and accustomed to hard work; Mairat was an honest man and an excellent worker, and a favourite of my Aunt who had loved him ever since he was a baby. So the worthy Ferlet married them, in order to have a son-in-law who would help to cultivate such small property as remained to him. . . . My two cousins, by their personal worth, had won positions as overseers, thus raising themselves above the stackers they controlled. They were paid piece-rate as are milkers, that is to say, so much on each one of the ten consignments convoyed by them to Paris, and they did very well. Furthermore, they were skilled in the vineyard, and were highly considered at Vermenton as vine-dressers. I mentioned my plan to my patroness. She favoured it, and seemed delighted that I should have thought of sacrificing one of my little love affairs, for the sake of providing good matches for these near relatives. She promised to approach M. Servigné on their behalf, and to do all that their parents would have done had they been on the spot; so that this worthy man should be treated honourably in every way. We chose a day of which I notified Catherine in advance, and Madame Parangon, under my escort, called on M. Servigné to ask permission to introduce M. Mairat to him. I wrote at once to my cousins, and they reached the town the day before the one on which they were to be presented. This was the second of two holidays, and it was about midday on the first when they made their appearance. They were tall, good-looking fellows, as we know: the elder, dark like his father and about six feet in height; the younger not so tall, and fair as my mother, his Aunt, and with the pleasantest face. I had them cleaned and curled, and then I took them to a place whither Catherine, who was the only one in the secret, had agreed to bring her sister. When we met them on the rampart of the Bénédictines, it looked as though we had merely come out for a stroll. "Why, I believe that's Monsieur Nicolas," said Catherine to Edmée, "with two other lads from his part of the world; his brothers, perhaps, or cousins." She smiled at me, and I went eagerly to meet her. "That is Monsieur Jean," she said to me, pointing to the dark one. "Quite so; he is the taller." "That is as it should be," she answered, "because he is the elder." She said this with a purpose: she knew the two brothers well enough; but I saw what underlay her words, and that she wanted to force Edmée to fix her attention on Bertrand. And indeed, this fair youth could not fail to be more to Edmée's liking, not only because he was delicately made and handsome, but because he looked more the *gentleman.* I introduced my cousins. Bertrand opened his eyes at Edmée; he had already seen her, but she looked even prettier now, dressed with the care befitting a great festival such as Whitsuntide. I proposed a light refreshment. "We are just at our door," answered Catherine. "Come in." I accepted; for all this had been arranged beforehand, to lead Edmée gently towards what we wanted. In the house the introductions were completed, and the two suitors spoke for themselves. Jean was already accepted; Catherine was almost an old maid (she was twenty-seven at the time), and did not want to lose much time in getting married. As for Edmée, Bertrand would be her sister's brother-in-law and this was claim enough on her esteem, and would unfailingly decide their father in his favour. After half-an-hour's conversation, during which I dropped a few remarks that would give Edmée to think, the three of us left. Catherine had told me at what time her father would be home, and I went in search of Madame Parangon, while my cousins rested at M. Chambonnet's.

About six in the evening I set out with Madame Parangon: "I am curious to see this little Edmée," she said. "Châtelain's wife described her as a very pretty girl with whom you had been just a little in love." "You will see her, Madame; she is, as a matter of fact, a very pretty girl; but as for love, I only love one person, and it is not Edmée." "One person!" "Yes, Madame; could I love two?" "That is just what I do not know. . . . But surely you love my Fanchette dearly?" "I adore her, Madame." "I am satisfied, and I ask no more of you. . . ." My cousins met us on the way at the time I had given them – and came with us to the door but did not enter the house.

M. Servigné, in white coat and cotton cap, was taking the air at his garden gate when we arrived. He was expecting us, but as he had never met Madame Parangon, he was none the less surprised that so fair a lady should honour him with a visit. I introduced her to the old man by the single word, *Madame*. He rose, and himself offered her a seat. "I have come, Monsieur Servigné," she began, "to propose two honest men, near relations of our friend here, as husbands for these two sweet girls." "Madame," answered the old man, "it is a great honour to me that a lady such as yourself should condescend to present a son-in-law to such as I, and, from so excellent a source, I accept him, Madame. If he is here, let him come in. . . ." I went to fetch the two brothers, while the old man continued: "I feel, Madame, as I should feel, the honourable manner in which

Monsieur Nicolas has acted towards me and towards my daughters; in the same spirit, he has told Catherine that he will arrange for his father to come here also, to support you in this business, Madame." At this moment I returned with Jean and Bertrand Mairat, whom Madame Parangon presented, saying: "These are the brothers, two fine, tall lads." "Yes, Madame, they are that." "Then where are . . . the two young ladies, your daughters?" continued Madame Parangon. "They are shy of appearing before you," said the old man. "Go and fetch them," said the fair lady. "I really must kiss them." I took Edmée by the hand and asked Catherine to go on ahead. When Madame Parangon saw her she went straight up to her and kissed her; then she looked at her: "You are a good girl," she said, "what is your name?" "Catherine, at your service, Madame." "I have just asked for your hand in marriage, on behalf of Jean Mairat, my compatriot and a relative of Monsieur Nicolas, who is to be my brother-in-law. . . . But where is Mlle Edmée?" Then I led Edmée forward. Madame Parangon made a movement of surprise. I put Edmée almost into her arms, and she kissed her many times.

In the meanwhile Catherine, finding herself at liberty, approached her father, who was looking at Bertrand with every appearance of pleasure. "Father," she said, "if this marriage takes place, what about the brother for my little sister? For you hear that Monsieur Nicolas is to be Madame Parangon's brother-in-law." "You are right, Catos!" answered the good vine-grower. "Something of the sort was in my mind, but you have said it. . . . Do you know anything about the feelings of that youngster, Monsieur Nicolas?" (Bertrand was standing near Edmée and Madame Parangon.) "Do I know anything about them, Monsieur Servigné! He has come expressly to see if you will accept him as a husband for your youngest daughter." "And why not, if he is as decent a lad as he looks? He is of the same blood as his brother." "Oh, yes, father," said Catherine, "and Monsieur Nicolas will speak for him; and you may believe him too, for he would not lie or deceive Edmée even for a cousin german; he loves her too much for that." "Well, well, we'll see about all that when Monsieur Nicolas's father arrives, for I really must meet him. . . ." Madame Parangon rejoiced the old man with a thousand compliments upon his daughters, and especially his Edmée; he was enraptured to hear all that was best in her intelligently praised by a woman who seemed well qualified to judge. She added seriously: "Mademoiselle Catherine and Mademoiselle Edmée have a worthy man for their father; now they only need that man who is called *the Upright* throughout his district for their uncle." Such was the introduction of my two cousins. The old man kept them to supper, and I escorted Madame Parangon home.

"I never expected to find so much beauty and intelligence in a little local vine-dresser!" she said. "But of course she has been very well educated." "Yes, Madame; her god-mother was a demoiselle *Pagany*, who went to live in retirement at the *Providence*; she took Edmée with her, and left her quite a good dowry, which sweet Edmée insisted on sharing with her sister. And Catherine, all gratitude, loves her as though she were her daughter, while Edmée honours Catherine, not as a sister, but as a mother." "I am pleased that you give so much thought to your family, and this marriage gives me a double satisfaction: it proves that you have a good heart, and shows a flattering preference for Fanchette; for perhaps Edmée means more to you even than Manon Prudhôt or Madelon Baron or Colombe or Marianne Tangis or, in a word, any of those others who have attracted you." "Except one, Madame." "Possibly!" she answered, pretending not to understand me: but she certainly understood a moment later, for I saw that she had turned very red. We left it at that, as M. Parangon had already come in to supper when we reached the house.

He had seemed surprised when Toinette told him, in accordance with her mistress's orders, that Madame had gone out with myself and my two young cousins. "May I know about all this?" he asked Colette. "From one end to the other," she answered. "We have just been to ask for two young girls in marriage, on behalf of two cousins of Monsieur Nicolas. I happen to know these lads, as they come from Accolay, half a league from my own village; and, as I have a high esteem for their excellent parents, I was able to speak for them with confidence." "Are they pretty?" asked M. Parangon. Colette forestalled my answer: "They are a little bit tanned, as are all vine-dressers, but they are well made; one is twenty-seven, and the other . . ." M. Parangon yawned, and interrupted her, saying: "They sound thoroughly sensible marriages, and that is what is wanted in the country. . . . Let's have supper. . . ." He rang for Toinette; Jean Lelong brought in the supper, and we talked of other things.

Mme Gaudet d'Arras, who was still not generally known as such, was soon to leave the town with her husband, and after supper she came in search of Madame Parangon. "I ought to be coming back with you to see more of pretty Edmée," the latter said to me. "Give my kind regards to her, and to her father and sister. . . ." She really wanted to leave me free, though at the same time she meant what she said. I bowed to the two ladies, and Mme d'Arras said as I was leaving: "I am so sorry that you are not spending the evening with us, Monsieur Nicolas. Monsieur d'Arras is ten times gayer when you are there; he loves you dearly, and can never make an end of praising you. . . . You have been his confidant in many adventures?" she added laughing. "Sweet lady," I answered in the same tone, "in none that was not fair and honourable and fortunate; for I rejoiced as much in your happiness as you did yourself." "And I shall see you happy too one day, and congratulate the husband of the sweet sister." "Without wishing to say anything derogatory," I answered, as though in spite of myself, "would it might be as the husband of . . . *Her* . . . whom all here . . . adore!" I fled on the last word, amazed at my audacity.

I went back at a run to the Servignés, and found them waiting for me before sitting down to table. I was surprised, as I had not been asked to supper; but apparently, when they invited my cousins, they assumed that I would join them after escorting Madame Parangon home. However, there was no difficulty in finding a good excuse; but I could not eat as I had already supped; still less could I drink. . . . I chatted to the old man about my father, relating all that I knew about his childhood, his life, and his two marriages. I told of my grandfather, his severity and my father's enduring filial respect and love for him. M. Servigné was much affected by this portrait, which I have since reproduced in the *Vie de mon Père*: "Monsieur Nicolas," he said, "arrange for me to meet this worthy son of the worthiest of fathers as soon as possible; for Pierre was as one ought to be in bringing up a family, and you can see for yourself that your excellent father, Edme, is, in all filial respect, grateful for your grandfather's patriarchal strictness." Then I described our family prayers and chapter from the Bible, for which we gathered each night before the children and servants separated for sleep. "Oh, we must do that too, children," exclaimed the old man. "I am surprised it has never occurred to me! It must have been because I thought that private prayer was more valuable, as being freer and more spontaneous?" "That is an excellent point," I answered, "but our family prayers were very short: just the *Credo*, *Ave* and *Confiteor*; then each of us said his private prayer before getting into bed. My father, who is always on the look-out for anything good, told us that, in the house of Nicolas Ferlet, the maternal grandfather of myself and my two cousins, the only prayer made in common consisted of these four words: *Let us thank God!* repeated upon the knees after supper. Afterwards each one spoke to the Eternal according to his heart. My father praised this custom of the worthy Nicolas, and said that it sprang from his natural modesty and distrust of himself." "Oh, what a worthy family, on both sides! Oh, what an excellent man is your father! . . . Could I not meet him next Sunday, with our two friends here? For I would like this week to talk things over with my daughters, and decide what is best to be done." I promised to send a letter by my cousins, to be left at Vermenton with M. Collet, whence the market women would take it to my father on Tuesday morning. "I shall take it to Sacy myself!" exclaimed Jean Mairat. "Is it not our duty to go and see my uncle and aunt to tell them about the happiness we have in prospect, and to thank them for having brought up their children to be like brothers and sisters to us? . . . I have indeed already said something on the subject; but as nothing was settled, I could do no more than mention the good qualities of the young ladies. And how could I have foreseen such a father as . . . this excellent man? Whereas now that we have been received by Monsieur Servigné, Mademoiselle Catherine and Mademoiselle Edmée, I can speak with more assurance, and say to my uncle: Monsieur Servigné is like you in every way; and you, like Monsieur Servigné." So far my cousins had done no more than answer when they were spoken to, and M. Servigné was well satisfied with this little speech; he smiled and blushed with pleasure: "Well said, my friend," he cried, "you have just proved yourself a true member of your family. . . ." Then we said goodbye to father and daughters, and were invited to take breakfast with them before my cousins left.

No one had as yet come home; so I took down a book from the little shelf, instead of going to talk to my pupil who seemed to be busy. I chanced upon a new book, which I had not yet seen: *The Letters of Fanny Butler.* When I had read some of the letters, I came upon a sheet of paper with this note written on it in Madame Parangon's hand:

> *"I am reading this book with a great deal of pleasure: it shows how a heart can be taken captive against reason and without intention. . . . What did I say? Against reason? I do not think one ever loves without a reasonable basis for that fond passion: and this is, the expectation of happiness. If one says to a lover:* SUPPRESS YOUR PASSION AND LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF REASON! *it is as though one said:* FEEL OTHERWISE THAN YOU FEEL; SEE OTHERWISE THAN YOU SEE; GET YOURSELF A NEW IMAGINATION THAT WILL REPRESENT THINGS OTHERWISE, *etc. . . . Ah, reason is in accord with love; it is only circumstances that oppose it! Am I to believe that a certain woman whom I know would not be happy, if she were free to follow her inclination for a young man, who owes everything to her, whom she has formed, whom she watches unceasingly, whom she sees go astray, yet dares not restrain! . . . Yes, she would be happy but for circumstances; they and not reason condemn her love: for . . ."*

This note plunged me into a profound reverie, in which I remained absorbed until I heard some one come in. I hurriedly returned the book to its shelf and assumed a calm demeanour. It was Madame Parangon, whom Manon and Gaudet d'Arras had brought home. Gaudet d'Arras said goodbye to me, and we were as much affected as though we foresaw, against all appearances, that we should never meet again. . . .

Then M. Parangon came in, and Colette talked to me about my cousins in his presence. I described my visit after supper, and left her without having had a chance to speak about the note I had found.

For some part of the night I meditated upon this note. . . . I was surprised and delighted to find that Colette entertained the same thoughts as I myself had often had. My mind had been turned to her widowhood by an accident which had happened to M. Parangon, who had been nearly suffocated by the charcoal fumes from a little earthenware stove in his room. I made up my mind to possess myself of the note next day, and add a few lines in my own hand after the "for" . . . if the sentence had not already been completed. I waited impatiently for evening. I left the table directly I had supped (and that was quickly done) and watched for a moment when the parlour should be empty. Then I went in, and was glancing over the shelves, when I caught sight of M. Parangon sitting in a corner reading the book. I trembled in every limb! "Why could I not have taken the paper yesterday," I reflected. "But I never think of the right thing to do until afterwards! How imprudent of her to leave it in a book. . . . I should never have thought her capable of such a mistake! . . . He always goes out after supper, and would never sit and read this book, if his curiosity had not been aroused by finding the paper. . . ." While these thoughts were passing through my mind, Madame Parangon came down from her room with Toinette; she saw M. Parangon reading, and seemed in no way disturbed, and this reassured me. As they began talking together, I went away with Toinette. I was struck by the sadness in her face, and asked what was the cause. "Madame and Monsieur have had a little disagreement," she answered. . . . I turned pale. . . . I told Toinette that I was tired, as I had seen my cousins on their way that morning, after breakfasting with M. Servigné. And to conceal my inner trouble, I related all that had happened at the breakfast, and how the good old man had declared that one word from my father would take the place of all information about the young men, although he was only their uncle, and decide him in favour of the marriage, not only of one, but of both girls. . . . I added that I had written a letter to my father there, and that one of my cousins was to deliver it, while the other carried the good news to their own parents. "So," I concluded, "I expect my father and my two cousins next Sunday. . . ."

Just then M. Parangon slightly raised his voice, and as we kept quietly attentive, we could hear what was being said in the parlour. I listened in great perturbation, and noticed that Toinette turned pale. I held out my hand mechanically, and she took and pressed it. We were like two children who see their mother in some danger which they cannot avert. . . . We stood still listening, scarcely daring to breathe: "I make no complaint," Madame Parangon was saying with great moderation, "but I thought this girl was safe with you; you promised me, and gave your word to her also; so that I went surety for your good conduct. . . .(Lowering her voice.) You assault her. . . . That is very bad! . . . Suppose she should become pregnant, what would you do?" "Madame, I agree that what I did was wrong; none the less, if what you suggest came to pass, my joy would surpass any sensual pleasure I have ever had." "And in that event, Monsieur, I should gladly offer to do what has cost me so much with the other four; I would bring the child up myself." "You would bring it up yourself! . . . Ah, Madame, this is beyond everything! You were better than I before; but now you are too far above me. . . . And for my part, I swear that, if the child is a boy, he shall have the position and rights of the eldest; for, in my opinion, the latter can never come to any good, with a mother who was vice personified. . . ." With these words he rose and offered his hand to his wife; for they were going to see M. Bourgoin, Manon's father. They made a point of not leaving the two old people alone immediately after so painful a separation.

When I turned to Toinette, whose hand was still in mine, I saw she was in tears. "My dear girl," I said, "am I right in thinking that they were speaking of you?" "Alas, yes!" she answered. "It was the most wicked trick that anyone could play on a poor girl. It happened on Friday." "I remember you seemed different that day!" "I was in Monsieur's office, drying some printed sheets at his stove; they were urgent. The same accident happened to me as to him; the charcoal caught me by the throat, and I nearly fainted. I just managed to reach Madame's bed, and was leaning against it when he came in. . . . Then I fainted. . . ." The rest was easily understood. I had been at least as guilty; so I made excuses for him, on the score of Toinette's beauty and his long desire for her, and tried to make her pardon him. "Never," she said. "He has deprived me of the satisfaction of having belonged to one man only. Never!"

When I had left Toinette, I reflected on this incident; and, if I must here confess to all my baseness, I was well pleased that there should be some uncertainty . . . in case of pregnancy. . . . A contemptible, because an unnatural, thought! But this crime of my heart was unnecessary: never, to my knowledge, has Toinette, girl or wife, become a mother. . . .

But some one else did, and this was the twentieth of my natural children, of whom I will here give a list*: 1. *Zéphire,* by Nannette Rameau; 2. *Juliette*, by Julie Barbier; 3. *Estherette*, by Esther the Negress; 4. *Éléonore*,

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*See *Drame de la Vie*, p. 689 ff.

by Marguerite Pâris; 5. *Marie-Jeanne*, by Marie-Jeanne Levêque; 6. *Marguerite*, by Marguerite Miné; 7. *Reine* (of whose existence I was long unaware), by Manon Prudhot; 8. *Agathe*, by Aimée Châtelain; 9. *Thérèse*, by Madelon Baron; 10. *Sophie*, by Émilie Laloge; 11. *Pauline*, by little Marianne; 12. *Edmée Colette*, by Madame Parangon; 13. *Amaranthe*, by the Phantom of the 14th of August, 1753; 14. *The Boy*, by Flipote; 15. *Tonton*, by Tonton Lenclos; 16. *Louise-Élizabethe*, by Colombe; 17. *Edmée*, by Edmée Servigné; 18. *Mariannette*, already in the bosom of her mother, Marianne Tangis; 19. *Rosalie*, by Rose Lambelin. And finally we come to the twentieth in this little census: *Marote* the Second, by Marote Baron. I heard about it next day through Toinette. "What is to be done?" she asked. "The poor girl has no suspicions as yet, but she told me all about that day in the loft, and asked my advice. I think she has been caught; for she is having slight attacks of sickness. . . ." I was stunned by this blow, which came as a complete shock although I might have expected it. I repeated Toinette's words: *"What is to be done?"* Gaudet d'Arras had gone. . . . Suddenly I came to a decision. . . . I went into the parlour, and found Madame Parangon there alone. I begged her to grant me a moment of private conversation, and she consented as though she had expected this request, and went upstairs to her room. I knelt before her directly we were inside; and, without raising my eyes, described what we had seen from the loft, toning down the details and withholding the names of those concerned. I admitted the impression that this sight had made upon me, witnessed in company with Toinette and Marote, and how beside myself, I had thrown myself upon the latter; and finally that she was pregnant, or so Toinette thought. "What like of man is this, whose welfare I have undertaken!" Such were Madame Parangon's first words. "But no matter, he cannot make me give him up. . . ." I said something about Gaudet d'Arras, who knew all about the incident. She made a gesture of disapproval. "I will see to everything," she answered. "You need not appear; Toinette and I are enough. . . ." Not until she had made herself responsible for the future did she utter one word in rebuke. . . . I listened without impatience, though reproaches always weary me; I listened with pleasure, and found them all too gentle and too short. . . . I kissed her hands before rising. Then she said: "Ah, my friend, how you should love a kind sister, who is indulgent to your faults and weaknesses, such as they are, instead of making monsters out of them! To exaggerate a fault is always a sign of dislike, except in a father or a mother." "But you extenuate mine." "And you know why. . . . Reproaches are not necessary to make you feel remorse. And besides, my position in regard to you is such that I can see nothing in your conduct which is not excusable, to anyone except yourself: for there are . . . more guilty actions still. . . . Go: leave me . . . and send Toinette to me. . . ." I knelt outside her door; I prostrated myself before it; never had I so deeply worshipped Madame Parangon as in that moment. . . . Then I went downstairs. Cold hearts may call it mummery; but I can feel, and regard all those who cannot feel with me, not as living readers, but as the dead. Oh, Dead, strive to live; and afterwards you can judge the Living. . . .

Toinette went up to her mistress. A moment later she came down again, and I saw her bring in Marote. . . . Doubtless Madame Parangon explained everything, and reassured the simple girl by her kindness. As there was plenty of time, they decided to make certain of her condition before sending her away; and the girl stayed for two more months with the Dlles Baron. She left them at the end of her year, presumably to take a place in Paris. . . . And there Gaudet d'Arras found means to get hold of her. He brought up the child, and she remained with him when the Dlles Baron took Marote with them to Dieppe, where they treated her as a sister.

My father and mother arrived on Saturday evening, the Eve of Trinity Sunday, and were brought up to the printing-room by Madame Parangon, as they had asked if they might see me at work. They watched me intently, signing to the pressmen (who could see them) to say nothing. I was working energetically, yet saying a word from time to time to Loiseau and Bourgoin, who were chatting while distributing; I was just finishing something urgent. As I set up the last line, I exclaimed: *Finis coronat opus!* and laid my sheets on the marble ready for imposing. I could not see my parents, as they were hidden in a press which was not being used: but I caught sight of Madame Parangon. "Some one is waiting for you," she said. "I have finished, Madame," I answered, thinking that she meant that M. Parangon was waiting for my work. "I am imposing now, and will bring down the proofs." I hurried to tighten up the forms, and put them on the press which concealed my father and mother, still without seeing them. Then I went in to take off the proof myself, and saw them. I uttered a cry of joy, and kissed them. I asked their permission to finish my proofs, and they came out of the press. I was only a moment, and we went down together. I delivered the proofs to M. Parangon, and asked his permission to take my parents to see M. Servigné. "You would not have got it," he said smiling, "if your work had not been finished; but you have got it done three hours earlier than I hoped. You may go!" So I escorted Edme Restif and Barbe Ferlet to M. Servigné's house, explaining on the way all that I had done. At M. Chambonnet's we picked up my uncle and aunt Mairat, who had come too. The young men had been detained by their work, and could not reach the town until two days later; they were setting out the following night, after taking an hour or two's sleep to refresh themselves, and would arrive at six in the morning. I went ten paces or so ahead of the others, and found the old man at his gate. " My father and mother have arrived," I told him, "and the parents of my cousins also." "God be praised!" he exclaimed. "That is more than I had hoped for!" And he got up quickly. "That is my father," I said. "Peace, young man! You have deprived me of the honour of recognising the honest man you have so well described by the look of him. . . ." He embraced my father, saying: "I love you as a brother, and respect you as it is fitting to respect a good and upright man. Madame!" he continued to my mother, "you are most welcome! And it is my wish that, on entering my house, you should have as complete authority over my daughters and everything else therein, as had the late *Edmée Catherine Môgeot*, my dear lamented wife and the mother of the girls whom I will now introduce to you." Then he embraced old M. Mairat, who had that air of simple goodness which is the expression of a sincere and upright heart; then my Aunt Mairat, who was goodness personified, for her plain face could not prevent her from being lovable and beloved by everyone. "My house is small," said the old man, "but it will hold you all; for when people love each other, it is a pleasure to be at close quarters. I have two beds for my elder and honoured guests: one in my little room here overlooking the garden, and the other above, on the upper floor." They tried to refuse, but he only answered: "Do not deny me the pleasure of having you near to me; for one cannot be too close to the good, or too far away from the evil-minded." In the meantime Catherine and Edmée were preparing a light refreshment while waiting for supper. Catherine brought wine for the men, and, as the sisters, my mother and my aunt, did not drink, she ran to a neighbour who kept cows for a living; and he drew milk for her, which she brought all warm to the two good-hearted and estimable women. They drank, and made me drink with them, upon which my father said: "Up to the age of twenty-two, I preferred milk to wine." "But now you prefer wine to milk?" said the vine-tender. "Try some of this, dear cousin; I should be glad to have your opinion of it?" Now M. Servigné had some of the best wine in town, after *Migrenne* and *La Chênette*; as his vines were situated behind *Saint-Gervais*. My father found it delicious, and affirmed that it was the best wine that he had ever tasted. Then the three men conversed together about Holy Writ and the Patriarchs, and discussed rural conditions; while the two mothers, the two girls and myself, talked of more personal matters. I described how I had met Edmée at Vaux and fallen in love with her; concealing nothing from the good wives; how later I had wished I had a brother at the village to give to her; and how, one Sunday, when my cousins had come to see me on their way home from Paris, I had shown the sisters to them, and they had found them worthy of all their affection; how this had led me to speak to Mlle Catherine, the best and most discreet girl I had ever known; how I had tried after this to foster the acquaintanceship, so that I might have the honour of being allied to girls of such merit, and procure so advantageous a settlement for my cousins. "Dear Nicolas," said my good aunt. . . . "How frankly and well he speaks, sister!" "He only speaks as he ought to," answered Barbare Ferlet, "for I can see all the good qualities which he attributes to these girls in their faces." "Oh, Mesdames," cried Catherine, "and I must say that I have never known a young man who thought and spoke so nicely as Monsieur Nicolas! If you could have heard how he talked when he had to tell my sister that he could not be engaged to her! It was enough to bring tears to the eyes!" My mother and aunt begged her to repeat my words. "One moment," she answered, and ran to take a look at the supper which was cooking. As everything was going well, she came back again. "I will look after it, sister," Edmée said. "No, no, stay here; I have always been the housewife, and shall continue to be so after you are married, if you and your husband live with us as my father wishes." "Oh, and that is what I should like too," said my aunt, "because they are so young. . . ." Then Catherine repeated what I had said, and I think improved on it, as her mode of expression was more suited than mine to simple goodness of word and deed. . . . My aunt threw herself upon my neck, exclaiming:* "Oh, the good boy! He is his father and Nicolas Ferlet rolled into one, sister!" "He has been taught good principles," my mother answered, "and I thank God that he has profited by them – although thanks to a kind and virtuous lady, his lot will not be as he described it: yet, without her help, it would have been, and still will be, if she fails him, which God forbid! But I am quite delighted with these dear pretty girls! They are good and sensible, and Mademoiselle Catherine is active to a degree! and that appeals to me, sister!" "And so it might, sister, for you are always up and doing yourself." "As for Mademoiselle Edmée, she is so sweet, so modest, and so gentle that I cannot conceive how my son. . . . But you know, sister, what he has in view; and that, as soon as this seemed possible, he could not do otherwise than accept his good fortune as eagerly as was becoming; moreover he had seen the young lady in question first. Don't you think that Mademoiselle Edmée is somewhat like the beautiful lady who came to see us?" I seized joyfully on this remark as though it had been addressed to me: "Don't I think so, mother! I have said so a hundred times." "So you see, my child, that all beautiful things resemble each other."

*See the 41st illustration of the *Paysan-Paysanne pervertis;* which portrays this scene.

Such was my dear mother's conclusion: was it subtlety – or simplicity? I do not know, but I incline to the former. Then she asked Edmée frankly, if she had loved me, and the girl answered with equal frankness: "Oh, yes, Madame, and I don't mind saying so to you because you are his mother. It was for his sake that I accepted his cousin-german without question." "That is true," added Catherine, "for it was not more than two days ago that my sister said: 'I would rather it had been Monsieur Nicolas, for he is the first lad I have not been frightened of; but as that cannot be, his cousin seems another Nicolas, and I like him better than any of the young men here.'" Such was the evening's conversation. I was enchanted to leave my father and mother, and my uncle and aunt with such excellent people.

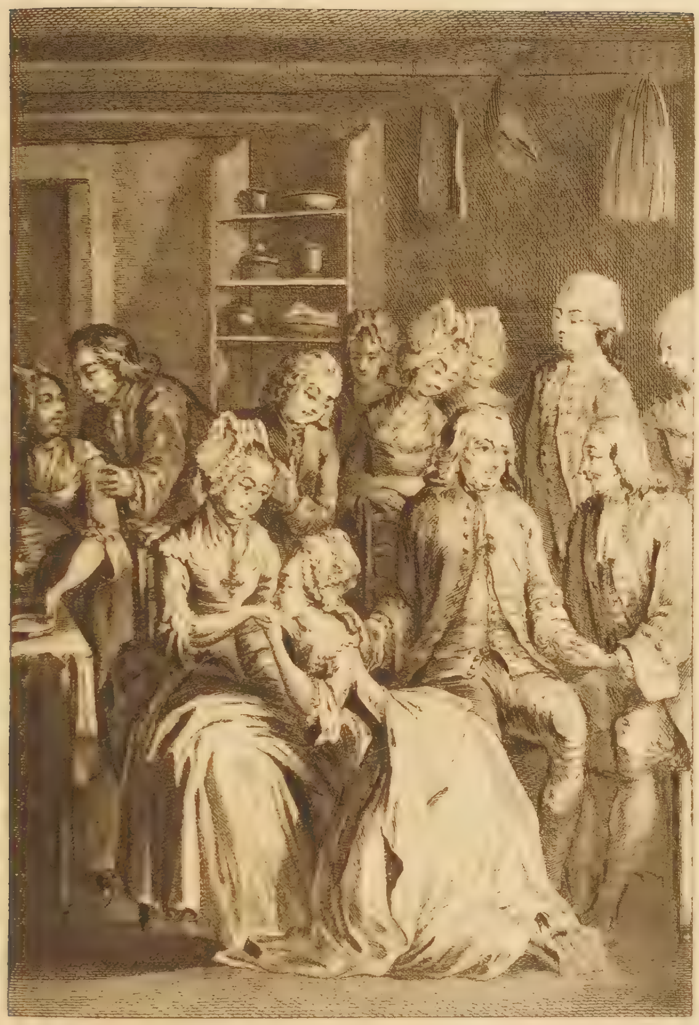
I went to fetch the small luggage from their friend Chambonnet with Catherine and Edmée, who insisted on coming too. I do not know what passed between the three old men in our absence, but Père Servigné pointed to me as I came in and said to my father and uncle: "I have spoken of him as a young man; but I shall not call him that again; he is already mature. . . . From all that I hear about him, Brother," he continued to Mairat, "he will become some day what neither you nor I are, nor even his worthy father; in him we have the successor of Pierre, your honoured sire; and it vexes me he was not given that name in baptism." "And me also," answered my father, "if he would have done it so much credit." I bade everyone goodnight and, as I was embracing M. Servigné, he held me a moment in his arms, saying: "Monsieur Nicolas, I have heard some fine things from your father to-night; and what you said of him fell, if anything, short of the truth. So I shall believe everything you tell me in the future. . . . My dear good boy, may you be an honour and comfort to your father and mother, uncle and aunt, brothers, sisters and cousins, and to all your family! And to this I add a father's blessing, although you are not my son!" "And may the Lord ratify it!" exclaimed my father, and my mother, uncle and aunt said the same. I departed, my head full of excellent matter, and my heart warmed with the love of virtue; for this honest company had revivified my natural goodness.

Next day, Sunday, Toinette woke me at seven o'clock. "Your cousins are downstairs," she said. "Would you like them to come up?" "No, dear girl; tell them to go to my barber, Gendot, opposite the Hôtel-de-Ville, while they are waiting for me." "Good, but they are already curled like any Jesus!" "All right then, I will come in a moment; make them sit down, so that they can rest a little." I was quickly dressed, and found my two cousins at breakfast. There was a bottle between them but they would only take a finger of wine each. I took them at once to the Servignés, telling them that all our people were there. "So we were told at Monsieur Chambonnet's," they answered. "That is why we disturbed you so early." We reached our destination at eight o'clock. Everyone had been up a long time, and breakfast was on the table. "Be very welcome, children!" said the old man. "Everything has been discussed, and your advocates are too good not to win your case, even were it a bad one. . . . But it is a good one, thank God!" We sat down to breakfast. The question of contracts came up, and my father undertook to draw them after the content had been made clear to him. Bertrand and I wrote out the banns, and my uncle and M. Servigné took them to Monsieur Creuzot, curé of Saint-Loup, at the same time showing him the duplicates, which were to be given to the curé of Accolay. It was agreed to publish them first on Sunday, the 1st of June, and again on the 8th and on the 15th; but the marriage was not to be celebrated until Tuesday, the 8th of July. When everything had been settled, the two families parted, promising to meet again on the 7th of July for the signing of the contracts, the betrothals, and the wedding next day.

My four relatives then called on Madame Parangon, to thank her for all that she had done in the matter. During the visit Colette gave them a hint of her plans for me. My mother trembled for joy, and even my father was deeply moved. Not wishing to delay them, Madame Parangon had prepared a letter to her father; this I did not hear, as she read it to them in private and then sealed it, adding: "My father will tell you everything himself. Go there to-day: it will not take you out of your way, as you will have to pass through Vermenton in any case, if your sister and brother-in-law are going with you in your carriage." This was all I heard. My father and mother departed, overwhelmed with joy.

When they reached Vermenton, my parents escorted my uncle and aunt to the little boat opposite Bertro, which still belonged to the latter in their mother's right, and then called on M. Collet, whom they found just returning from Vespers. They gave him his beloved daughter's letter. And she was indeed beloved, so much so that he kissed the letter before opening it. He read it twice, and then said to my father: "As you know, I have already spoken to you about this matter. Now I give you my word of honour . . . unless . . . your son became a good-for-nothing; but that, I hope, will never happen . . . far from it! For I have the highest hopes of that young man: and it will be a misfortune for my daughter if she does not wed him. That is my opinion, anyway. . . . As you see, I speak openly, and without even asking you to keep the matter secret: for I have no desire to break my word in favour of a richer man; a richer man might be found, but not a man I love as much as your Nicolas. . . ." Before closing this incident, I will quote Madame Parangon's letter to her father; for I saw it when it was found among his papers two years later:

> *"Dear Papa, the two good people who will give you this letter came here on a matter which gave me great pleasure, both because it was advantageous to the Mairat family, and because by giving up a charming and almost wealthy girl to one of his cousins your Nicolas has proved how set he is upon our marriage plan. And this is not the only sacrifice of the kind he has made; I could quote three others: our sweet neighbour on the other side from the Dlles Baron, a beautiful and rich girl from Joigny called Colombe, and little Marianne Tangis, whose good qualities, face and fortune make her dangerous! We are accountable to him for sacrificing these marriages – the more so as he would have been happy in any one of them, at least if he were not a monster, and that he is not. But it is not Fanchette alone who will repay him; you and I will contribute our full third, for, from something he said when we were talking one day, he is quite as much touched by the honour of becoming your son-in-law, dear Papa, as by being the husband of the prettiest blonde in the Canton. All his conversation shows how proud he will be to be the son-in-law of the most* EXCELLENT *man in the country, and the son of the most* UPRIGHT, *as you two are surnamed. And I pay my share too, for when I tried calling him brother, I saw how this exalted him in his own eyes. I assure you that the little person he is giving to the younger Mairat is very seductive, and . . . very loving. And this also gives me a high opinion of him: all the girls who have loved him are honest and good, and they have loved him to excess. There must be some good in him. More than once I have seen for myself the effects of his lovable disposition, and I confess I was as pleased as though I had been his own mother. As for your friends, dear Papa, the more one sees of them the better they get. I have met no one in the world to compare with them, save you and my most dear and honoured mother. So treat them with your natural kindness and the tender affection that you have always felt for them, and give them your assurance of this alliance which delights them as much . . . as me. . . . I speak plainly, because I desire it passionately, as much for love of my darling sister, my sweet Fanchette, as out of the affection I have felt since early childhood for her intended, and for his estimable family.*
>
> *Farewell, dear Papa. Your obedient and devoted daughter fills a third of her*



> *life with longings for your happiness and a third is busy with Fanchette's; and the remainder is occupied by looking after him upon whom she will depend – no easy task . . . so permit me a little pride: for anyone else would have failed a dozen times, but your daughter guarantees she will not fail.*
>
> COLETTE C . . . *wholly devoted to those she loves."*

Thus did the certitude of my marriage with Fanchette go on increasing.

On the 7th of July my parents, my uncle and aunt and my cousins arrived at eleven o'clock. The contract was signed, and the betrothals were completed in the evening. My two cousins Mairat spent the night with M. Parangon; one shared Bardet's bed, as he had a big one all to himself, and the other had mine, while I went to the Servignés and occupied Edmée's little bed, who, for this once, slept with her sister. *Sunt res infandæ, dictuque tam difficiles, ut inusitata dialecto oporteat uti. Media nocte aliqua de causa cum surrexissem, redeundo, manu arripior, tractusque sum ad cubile, in eoque sum introgressus. Conductrix abierat, et tamen inventa est in lecto puella. Concubatus dormientem tracto, et formas elasticas tangens, nullam esse nisi Edmundam, mihi a Catharina traditam, agnosco. Fremui! Sed vincit Cupido. . . . Semi expergefacta Edmunda: "Soror! sororella! quid agis? Me mactas! dilaceras! . . . Ha! . . ." Illa ter quaterve quassata, mutus abii. . . .* This is in agreement with the list of my children.

The bridegrooms appeared next day, radiant in their new clothes. M. Parangon escorted one of the brides to Church (and we may be sure it was the prettier), and my father the other. Madame Parangon walked between my two cousins, holding a white-gloved hand of each. I followed with the Chambonnets, father and son, who had M. Servigné's widowed daughter-in-law between them. The Maillot family and the families of certain other rich vine-growers, such as the Dallis, the Piffous, Châtelain and his wife, etc., brought up the rear, while the bridesmaids and groomsmen (whose ribbons had been paid for by my cousins, as guests in the town) formed the van. We arrived at the Church in this order. . . . After the ceremony the newly married couples walked, between a row of boys on one side and a row of girls on the other, to M. Dallis's vat-room, where the bridal party was to be held. Madame Parangon walked between my father and her husband; I was with the young people, lost in my own thoughts, but striving to be gay. M. Parangon could not get over his astonishment at Edmée's beauty! He kept on reverting to it, and could not understand how so lovely a person had failed to make a sensation in the town. "The fairest rose," remarked Colette, "can root and come to bloom in a poor man's plot without anyone taking the slightest notice of its beauty, whereas one which grows in a splendid garden strikes every eye; and is scarce opened before it is plucked: often it is withered before it has fully blown." "A poetic analogy," answered M. Parangon, "but I would put it otherwise. A beautiful rose is born and dies in a poor man's plot without anyone noticing it at all: the same rose growing in a great man's garden, excites admiration, is plucked, and sometimes dies in the bosom of the Queen."

My parents left after dinner. But this unique repast, at which they were present, pictured for me the bridals of patriarchal times. The conversation had a dignity, a grave interest, which impressed the comfortable vine-growers, and above all the Maillot family, who had some education; but all alike were filled with veneration for the old men. Even M. Parangon said to his wife and me: "When I look at that man" (pointing to my father) "I seem to see Abraham celebrating the nuptials of his son Isaac! . . . Yet he is neither tedious nor prosy; he speaks with dignity; he is well informed, and illustrates his remarks judiciously. It is a pleasure to listen to him."

And he listened, without speaking to us any more. Edmée heard what he said and, turning to Madame Parangon, asked: "Is your husband speaking of Monsieur Nicolas's father, Madame?" "Yes, child," answered Madame Parangon, kissing her. "Oh, Madame, I was thinking just the same, only I could not have put it so well. . . . After my father had seen him for the first time, he could do nothing but talk about him: more than that, he never says now: *That is good* or *bad*, but: *My brother of Sacy would approve of that*, or *disapprove.* And he never calls Monsieur Nicolas by his own name, but speaks of him as *the son of the Upright Man*, or *the Just Man.*"

After the two old couples had left, we spent the rest of the day in dancing. M. Servigné had announced that this would be the only entertainment, as he wanted to be among the first to break through the pitiful custom of letting the men of the party pay for the next day's hospitality. After their departure, as I was saying, we danced; I fetched a fiddler and paid his fee, bidding him say that he came as one of my friends. We had some good people at our dance: Baras-Dallis, the vat-room owner's son, brought us all the dancing youth of the town, and at the same time some of my day-time friends from the parish of *Saint-Renobert* joined us in the evening out of curiosity, bringing ladies with them; and these, seeing that Monsieur, and still more Madame Parangon were present, and that the assembly was quiet (for I maintained order throughout), consented to dance. They took refreshments with us, Catherine dispensing the food and Edmée the drinks, and the latter received a thousand compliments. My cousins were much surprised, and conceived a high opinion of their wives; and also a great respect for myself, on seeing me treated as a friend by the sons of a councillor, a lawyer and a doctor. . . . No one stayed late, and by eleven o'clock all was over – the brides' garters distributed, and the two couples in bed. . . .

Sed antea Edmundam Catharina sedulo monitam curavit, ne de noctu acta vigilia viro loqueretur.

My two cousins made their home in town with their father-in-law, and cultivated his land. They have prospered in their calling, passing serene and peaceful days in the midst of a contented family; whereas I, who brought about their happiness, have not been able to achieve my own! Poor wretch, whose sad life is even now (24th of February, 1784, and 12th of September, 1794) steeped in gall and bitterness.

I must now recount incidents somewhat to my discredit, after which I shall give the sequel to my adventure with Rose Lambelin: and this adventure, with but few digressions, will bring my fourth Epoch to a close. No period is noted in so much detail as the last months of my apprenticeship and the first of my career as journeyman-printer, up to my departure from Auxerre.

When, as a matter of honour, I gave up the lovely Tangis (for I feared to do her harm) I threw myself head foremost into my favourite amusement, and made three new dancing acquaintances, while keeping all those others whom I have already mentioned. My new friends were Mlles *Coquille*, *Lemonnier-Choyot*, and *Lenain-Lointron*, the latter a native of Nitry. All three were simple, ingenuous and charming; also they were quite new to the dance, and so were much honoured by my attentions. But whether my senses were beginning to get blunted, or whether I was influenced by the opinion of others, their appealing simplicity did not long attract me. I preferred more experienced coquetry. Definitely and firmly resolved not to bring disorder and seduction into the new households of my cousins, by taking advantage of my ascendancy over Edmée, I attacked every flirt I met and had, one after the other, the three girls that I have just named;

then a Mlle *Debierne* (by chance); then *Eglé Carouge* and *Philis Hollier*; the two *Bourdillats*, *Doris* and *Dirce*, since the latter's sisters-in-law; *Mamertine Hérissé*, *Manette Hérisson*, *Eulalie Gremmeret*, and *Cécile Pouillot*; *Aglaé Dhall* and her young sister, *Narcisse Séraphine*; *Naturelle Borne* and *Julie Degurgis*; *Marianne Geolin*, since married in Semur, and *Jeannette pretty-legs*, her sister, since married to J. Lelong; *Églé* and *Pauline Corbaux*; *Joséphine Fleury* and *Luce Drin*; *Josette* and *Marianne Gendot*, and the sister-in-law of these two girls; *Jeanne Girard*, who was betrothed to Anieli; *Mme Ruminy*, a pretty, lively Parisian, wife of a painter; Marianne Tangis's cousin *Dorothée*; the two *Lacours*; *Mar. Roullot*; *Aimée* and *Manon Julien*; *Cécile Ravet*, since married to a Paris glazier; *Marie Belier*, a well-to-do tripe-seller, since married to Bouzon the sailor; *Aurette* and *Suzon Duchamp*, vine-tenders, cow- and goat-herds and sand-sellers; *Ève Dallis*, the betrothed of Baras, son of the widow whom Dallis's father had married, and it was Baras himself who arranged for me to have her; why, I did not at first understand, but I guessed later that it was to avoid marrying her, as he preferred *Sophie Douy*; *Manon Julien*, the pastry cook and Gonnet's first mistress; *Nannette Chindé*, a tall, dark bakeress, M. Parangon's cousin; *Manon Duvet*, *Agnès Morillon* and *Mme Choin*; and finally the beautiful *Luidivine*, thanks to Mme Anieli at whose house I met her. (*For all these girls, and for others who will be mentioned later, see my Calendar, which will form a separate volume at the end of this work.*)

To go back a little: on the 13th of April, Loiseau, Gaudet and myself took part in a somewhat peculiar breakfast; the dishes served were as follows: wolf's tongue, jugged fox, cat stewed with spices, marten turned on a spit, and a chicken fricassee of young owls. Loiseau and I ate little, whereas Gonnet, Chambon the watchmaker (of whom we shall hear again), Calais the dancing-master, etc., seemed insatiable. The dogs refused to eat the wolf's tongue, which struck me as admirable. The affair was a wager of Chambon's, but neither Loiseau nor I were in the secret. In the middle of the meal the other parties to the wager arrived, five or six in all; among them Chavagny of the cook-house, Sophie's father, and More, son of a Swiss guard of M. de Caylus, who had entered the grocery business. They asked us if the food was good. "Excellent," replied Loiseau. "These gentlemen are simply devouring it." "And do you know what the dishes are?" Chavagny asked me. "Yes, this is a tongue" (I was going to add of Troyes mutton, as I had been told, when Chambon started howling; I understood, and continued) "of a wolf. . . ." Then, keeping my eyes on Chambon, who showed me a fox's tail, I went on: "And jugged fox . . . stewed cat, spitted marten . . . and chicken fricassee of owls." (Chambon, otherwise a stupid fellow, could imitate the cries of animals excellently, and put me in the know.) There was nothing repulsive to me about these dishes. At Sacy we used to eat the foxes my father killed, after having exposed them to the frost in the garden; I have seen marten pie on our table and very excellent it was; it tasted like rabbit. But cats were of course too valuable to be killed; they were as sacred in my father's house as in Egypt, because they drove away every harmful reptile, even killing the snakes. I have eaten wolf's cub, ass's foal, and kid; also dormice, rats and mice, roasted in vine leaves and stuffed with fresh butter – not at my father's table, but with the shepherds, Jacquot Guerreau and the two Courtcous. I told all this, to the consternation of the parties to the wager. This breakfast made almost as much noise in Auxerre as that famous supper (a little less strange perhaps) that M. de la Reynière the younger gave last year, a fortnight before he published his *Réflexions philosophiques sur le Plaisir.* (Unfortunately

I had no book at that time to popularise.) It also made some trouble between me and Gaudet, who took it as a practical joke against himself; but we were too good friends for this coolness to last. We made it up on the 20th, and went to Calais's together, and the dancing-master cleared me finally of all complicity. Here Gaudet met Guigner the younger for the first time, and was much attracted by her. Baras-Dallis was there also with Mlle Douy, the younger sister of Dhall's mistress, who was killed by a butcher. Halfway through the session, Gaudet was getting on so well with his young lady, and Baras-Dallis seemed on such good terms with his, and the dancing-master was so accommodating, that I escaped, taking young Colombat with me.

Colombat had a little chambermaid for light-of-love (Annette, his intended, was the object of his respectful affection). She worked for that Mme Thierriat, wife of the town Provost, whose little girl I had saved from cows and who had afterwards spoken to me. This chambermaid was very pretty, very prudish and very haughty towards the buxom easy-going cook, Nannette, who hated her. It was to this house that Colombat took me. The owners were away, and a light collation was suggested. I went to Mme Linard's for an excellent white wine at four sous (the ordinary wine was two), and Colombat fetched a pie at five sous (they charge twelve for the same thing in Paris), a piece of brain sausage (a rare dainty in the town; Chouin, the Parisian, was the only person who made it), and a pound of almonds and raisins, of which the two girls were very fond. There was a plot between Colombat and Nannette to intoxicate Pélagie Prévot (always known as *Percinette* in the town, on account of her affectation), and Nannette had secretly fetched some white wine and put it in the water jug. I knew nothing of this trick, and when Mlle Percinette asked for water, I gave her a double dose of wine without being aware of it. I did not fill my glass until I had been eating for some time, as was my custom, and then I found that I was drinking neat wine. As I did not understand how this had happened, I said nothing, but fetched a jug of water from the kitchen, and when the glasses were next filled, gave some to Percinette, who was already extremely gay. She said the stuff was bad and was given more neat wine; this she found excellent, so the water was left to me. By the end of the meal, pretty Percinette was a little Bacchante. The object of Colombat, a thin-blooded young fool, was not to seduce Mlle Percinette himself, but to procure this pleasure for me; and for Nannette, the pleasure of slandering her companion to her heart's content. Percinette drunk was most provocative, and I had to be very much in love with a pretty girl before I respected her! So there was nothing, save natural decency, to restrain me with this indiscreet little girl. Nannette, instructed by Colombat, whispered to Percinette that I could not endure being caressed by a girl, and would run away if she tried to kiss me. . . . All women delight to frighten a man, and the chambermaid came at me boldly, and fondled and kissed me. Mechanically I pushed her gently away, which doubled her boldness and redoubled my resistance; whence I conclude that attack adds to the resources of the assailant, while it always a little displeases the assailed, even when he enjoys the game. . . . But Pélagie, convinced that she would only make me angry, returned to the charge with such stimulating gestures that my senses took fire; and I could no longer contain myself when, as she rummaged me, these words escaped her: "Come, come! I must have it, I must!" She certainly never intended them to be taken literally, but I did not know this until afterwards. . . . Seeing that the crisis was near, Nannette and Colombat disappeared. Pélagie, a little drunk, went on exciting me, and what Nannette had foreseen did not fail to happen: Pélagie danced to my piping. . . . At this impatiently awaited moment, Nannette came back alone: "Oh, the wanton!" she exclaimed. "Fie, Fie! Look at her!" Percinette, sobered by what had passed, uttered a cry of fright, and implored Nannette not to betray her. "All right," answered the vindictive Comtoise, "but if ever you go sneaking to Madame about what you see in the kitchen, I shall tell her the whole thing." That was enough for me: I disliked the way in which Nannette was putting on airs at having caught us, and was mortified at having been made use of to put a young and pretty girl under the thumb of an ugly Comtoise. I made all this very clear to Colombat in her presence: I told Percinette exactly how she had been made drunk, and swore to Nannette upon my honour that I would proclaim her a wanton if she ever dared to use what she had seen against Percinette. "I did not possess her," I said firmly. "I might have wanted to, perhaps, if she had been herself, but you had made her drunk." "What!" exclaimed Nannette. "You were not . . ." "Certainly not!" I answered. "But I saw you." "You lie." "Ah, Nicolas, but I saw you too," said Colombat. "Take that back at once," I exclaimed, "or I will knock you down, friend of mine as you are." "What, you did not . . ." "Take back what you said!" I shouted, lifting my arm in seeming fury. "All right, I saw nothing." "You are wise," I replied. "I shan't take back anything," said Nannette, "for I saw you." "If I had possessed Mlle Percinette," I replied, "she would be under my protection from now on, and you would take back your words, Mamselle Nannette, or I should knock you down; for it would be my duty to defend her. But as I did not, you can say what you like . . . to me, but take care what you say to other people! As you value your life, take care! . . ." Percinette was holding on to my coat, fearing every moment that I would hurl myself on Colombat or Nannette. Thinking to calm me, she said: "Never mind; she is right, and what she says is true." "Why do you bring dishonour on yourself with a lie, Mademoiselle? . . . Leave us," I said to the others. And when we were alone, I said to Percinette: "Learn, Mademoiselle, that there is nothing a man must not do for a woman who has given herself to him; he must support her in every way: if she is suspected, he must deny; if there have been witnesses, he must give the lie to obvious truth. His first duty is to preserve the reputation of one who, for a few moments, has been his wife." "Ah, you comfort me more than you can think," she answered. "I have lost a maid's flower, but at least an honest boy has taken it, and that consoles me." She threw herself into my arms. I was not proof against a pretty girl's caresses, and did again the very thing I had just so brazenly repudiated. But no one dared to come and startle Percinette again. When taking leave of Nannette, I begged her to excuse my roughness, and assured her that her fellow servant was an honest girl. . . . "Oh, yes," she interrupted; "she is honest three times over now; once before the meal, and the twice you made her honest during it, that makes three." "And you?" "I? I am a thousand and one times honest." On this answer we parted.

I went away thoroughly discontented with my good luck! . . . And you, fellow citizens, do you not blush to see the friend of Madame Parangon and Mlle Fanchette's sweetheart, and the very man who honourably shunned lovely Marianne's society, thus debase himself to an ignoble part, and with his shame, tarnish the glory of those who loved him! . . . Put down this book, lovers of purity, if you do not want to know my sins and infamy! . . . When I am good and honourable, I show myself as such; when I am vile and base, I expose my disgrace and degradation.

On the 4th of May I dined out with the brothers of Mlles Maufront and Léger; Colombat and Gaudet were also of the party. Maufront and Léger were trying to discover the authors of a most infamous assault. I had never spoken to Mlle Maufront, but she was the most beautiful of all the lower-class girls who attended the ballrooms. It was not among the sons of artisans that one found the most brutal of our young townsmen; but in the clerical class, among the sons of attorneys and barristers and tradespeople of good position. These were the lads who could be called good-for-nothings in the strictest sense of the term; they not only had not the wit to make love successfully, but they retained, sometimes up to the age of thirty-five, a taste for the mischievous tricks of a schoolboy. [So there is nothing surprising in the success that we strangers to the town had with women; for many others besides myself were fortunate in this matter. We rose like the Phoenix above even the best-brought-up townsmen and always had the advantage over them with the other sex, by reason of our courtesy, our choice of language, our manners, and above all our mental attitude; for it is impossible to express how coarse and ridiculous, how repulsive, ignoble and vile were the ideas, manners and language of the Auxerrois. When a young Auxerrois sees a pretty girl, he first of all feels desire, as does anyone else if he be a man; but afterwards he experiences another and a stronger impulse, the lust to degrade and harm the person he has just admired; he would like to prostitute her, to tread her under foot, to cover her with filth, to beat her and make her languish in pain; he is a creature rather more ferocious than a tiger, and he is an Auxerrois. I speak without prejudice, for they have never done me any harm (M. Parangon, my most mortal enemy, was a Parisian); and I would willingly and gladly praise those who are almost my compatriots; but, with a few exceptions, such as the

Dupilles, the Pierrefittes, the Deschamps; and save for those belonging to the best families, most of whom were educated in Paris, such as the Pontagnys, the Avigneaux, the Charmelieus, the Thierriats, the Martineaus, the Baudessons, the Houssets, the Robinets, and others whose names escape me, I have given a faithful portrait of the young townsman of Auxerre.] . . . Pretty Maufront, always clean and elegant, roused the brutality of several young blackguards, and they resolved to ambush her on her way home alone in the evening, and whip and otherwise insult her. I had heard them discuss the matter, but thought it just another of the many atrocities that were talked about but never committed. Gaudet and Colombat knew more of what was toward, and both had refused to take any part in it. This infamous plan was executed one very dark evening when the wind was moaning in the alley between the Cathedral and the city, down which *Médérique* Maufront must needs pass under the eyes of her watchers. The conspirators had meant to throw themselves upon her in this lonely place; but she was walking so quickly that she was through it while they were still deliberating. They caught her up under the Clock: the unleashed winds were whistling and howling round the tower and spire, and every house in the quarter was close shut and dark. Opposite Mme Rouillot's door they surrounded Médérique and seized her; some of them trussed up her clothes and whipped her; others, more wicked still, tore bloody trophies from her body; while others profaned with their licentious hands those charms which every man of any delicacy respects as the cradle of Love. Mlle Maufront at first uttered stifled cries, but these grew piercing as her pain increased. . . . A noise made the blackguards abandon their prey; as timid and cowardly as they were shameless, they fled before the step of an old servant who had heard the screams: not one remained. Médérique could do no more; she was a terrible sight! For, among other brutalities, they had tarred her fair hair, her eyebrows, and every part of her beautiful body where hair was to be found. The old servant helped her up and supported her, still trembling, to the Place des Fontaines where she went into her friend Marianne Gendot's house, and there fainted. She was almost unrecognisable: her nose was bleeding, her hair black, and the huge eyebrows she had been given made her hideous. Moreover, it was feared that something even worse had happened. Mme Gendot sent her son and son-in-law to fetch Médérique's parents, while she tried to revive the girl with smelling salts. . . . Father, mother and brother arrived. Mme Gendot took Mme Maufront aside; they shut themselves up with the injured girl, and seized the first moments of returning consciousness to question her. Médérique told them everything without concealment. They emphasised the necessity of holding nothing back, on account of the consequences. "I have told you everything, I assure you," she answered. "Ah, what could they have done worse, save kill me? But oh, it hurts so . . ." she added, pointing to a place which made them tremble for her honour. Her mother persuaded her with tears and caresses to permit an examination. . . . But – most horrible! – the sticky tar redoubled the agony where her hair had been torn out by the roots. . . . They questioned her directly, and she answered as directly. "Come, then," exclaimed Mme Gendot, "a little soap and oil for the tar will quit us of the damage, if Médérique has told us everything." "I assure you," the girl stammered, "that they did not do . . . what my mother has just whispered to me." Her parents took her home, and spent the night in getting rid of the tar; but this was peculiarly painful, on account of the care necessary with her eyes, and the many excoriations left by the torture. As for her beautiful hair, she lost it all; for her head, her eyebrows and the rest had to be shaved. . . . On the next day, Sunday, her brother, with Léger's help, brought Gaudet, Colombat and myself together as neighbours, hoping, under the expansive influence of wine, to extract some information as to the guilty parties. His sister had not recognised a single one; for indeed the night was very dark, and the blackguards had taken care not to utter a sound and to grimace horribly, so that, in her own words, she had only glimpsed some devilish creatures.

Gaudet and Colombat knew one of those concerned; but they had not witnessed the assault. This indeed horrified them, which shows that it is less the crime itself than the atrocity with which it is committed which terrifies an infirm soul. (For Gaudet's behaviour with the Bourdeaux servant, and what Colombat had recently contrived with Nannette-Prévôt, will not have been forgotten.) My two comrades adroitly managed to get me alone, and asked my advice as to what they should say. "Take care not to tell anything!" I answered. "The harm is done, and cannot be undone, and if you denounce the sons of townsfolk you will be ruined! Where you were wrong was in not warning me beforehand." "But," said Colombat, "there have been a hundred similar plots against a hundred girls – fair Girard, Manon Léger, Tonton Lenclos, Hélène Cadette, the sisters Bourdillats, Eglé, Aglaé Ferrand; even the servant Naté about whom Joseph Ducrot wrote a Latin poem; even pretty Babet of the old King's Attorney, Renaudin – and not one of them has ever been put into execution. . . ." We rejoined our host one after the other, with no signs of self-consciousness. Maufront seemed cheerful enough during the meal, and insisted on paying the bill. Then he ordered an excellent bottle of wine, which he handed round, and afterwards another, and even a third; for Léger and Colombat drank copiously. Maufront drank sparingly, and I scarcely at all. "Are you afraid of wine, or of geting drunk?" the said to me. "Ask the others if I ever drink." "No, he never drinks more than that, nor even as much," said Léger. "He does not like wine." When Maufront saw that Gaudet and Colombat were well started, he questioned them skilfully. Gaudet had a sort of cunning, which consisted in pretending to be even franker and more ingenuous than he was by nature. He assumed an air of convincing simplicity, and poured out a mass of useless information, giving the impression of a man who knows nothing, but wants to appear as if he did. Moreover he told his tale in such a way that, in the end, Maufront was convinced that the affair was a chance encounter with some stranger clerks, and that no man of the town was involved in the detestable outrage. We went on to Fiévé's, which was the ordinary meeting place of such as Baras-Dallis, Léger, Dhall, Salle, and the other dandies of the ballroom. There Maufront found his friends, the journeymen saddlers, harness-makers, locksmiths, tanners, etc., who had offered to avenge him. He assured them that his sister had been insulted fortuitously by strangers, which was much less serious than if the affront had been planned in advance by her fellow citizens. I was not comfortable with these people. Gaudet and I were strangers to them, and they were perpetually whispering together, and staring at us; I could see that Léger, Dhall, and Baras-Dallis were obliged to defend us. Moreover Gaudet was behaving indiscreetly with the ladies, and treating them with the same familiarity he used with his servant girls. Finally I took him aside and advised him to escape quietly. Then I said aloud to Colombat: "You know how we are tied by time; we must be going." I said goodbye cordially to Léger, Baras-Dallis, Dhall, and Maufront, and they responded in like manner; and escorted us to the street. But as they re-entered the hall, I heard their friends, who were men I never came across, say: "We must follow them! They were in it! They were in it!" "I am certain they were not," replied Léger, "for I saw Nicolas in quite another place at the time when the thing happened." "It was the big fellow . . . and the little one, who did it!" said another. "The big one had nothing to do with it either," insisted Léger. "I saw him yesterday in front of his gate at the time." "So did I," Dhall supported him. "I only left him to find out what all the noise was about. But everything was over by then, and no one remained but the startled neighbours, who were questioning Madame Micoin, the watchmaker's servant, after she had taken Médérique home. As for Colombat, he belongs to the town." "Let us hide, and see what comes of all this," I said to Colombat. No sooner had we got behind a heap of refuse from a house that was being pulled down, than a couple of saddlers ran by in pursuit of us; the others called them back, but in a manner that indicated more desire that we should be caught than any wish to stop them. Léger and Baras-Dallis shouted mockingly after our pursuers: "Run, run, you'll catch them!" Nevertheless they prevented the others from joining the hunt. "There are two of them and two of us," I said to Colombat. "Let us follow. They want to give us a thrashing, do they? Very well, then, we'll give as good as we get!" Colombat, weak in character but full of courage, applauded the idea; so we left our hiding-place, with ears alert for any sign that others were following us. At the angle of the Rue de Fiévé and the Rue du Temple, we met the two saddlers coming back: "Are you looking for us, my friends?" asked Colombat. "We are!" said the foremost, aiming a blow at me with his short stick. My quickness enabled me to avoid it, and without attempting to close, I dodged in and out and landed him several blows with my fist. He picked up a stone. Then Colombat, who had been looking on with the other saddler, gave me a piece of wood about two feet long with which he had armed himself before leaving our ambush. I made a formidable weapon of it, and chased and beat my saddler, until he began to howl. Then his comrade ran to his help, and Colombat, crying out against him for a coward, came to mine, and went for both saddlers indifferently with his stick. I still avoided closing, for my antagonists were strong and very angry. I was everywhere; I would strike my man, and as he wheeled to seize me, surprise him with another shrewd blow. . . . But at last Colombat let himself be caught, and, as his opponent threatened to strangle him, I concentrated on putting my own man out of action, and dealt him such a terrible blow that he fell down, shouting: "I am killed!" I leapt on the other, and beat him with such fury that he let go of Colombat. "Fly!" I exclaimed. "You are more hindrance than help." "I'm done for," he groaned. "I can't move!" "Make an effort!" and he managed to get away. Left with only one opponent, I tired him out until he could do no more. I was exhausted and bathed in sweat, but I had not been hit once. I left the field of battle, joined Colombat, who was waiting for me, and put him to bed.

Colombat was bled next day. His grandfather and guardian wanted to lodge a complaint, but I prevented this. Both the saddlers were in bed and they too would have liked to complain; but they had not a single witness on their side, whereas I could have produced at least three to testify that they were the aggressors. . . . This evening raised me high in the opinion of Colombat, Léger, Baras-Dallis and Maufront. The latter, who was convinced of my innocence and who had been told how I had expressed my horror at the dastardly outrage on his sister when first I heard of it, came to apologise for the saddlers. Also they happened to be neighbours of Mlle Meslot, and when she heard they had attacked me, she refused to acknowledge their salutations, saying, in response to their complaints: "You assaulted an honest lad who is incapable of the slightest discourtesy to a woman. You are . . . I will not say what . . ." This rebuke from the lips of a pretty girl had more effect than everything else put together, and the two saddlers came in search of me and, having found me in La Maris's ballroom, apologised in their own fashion. I was with the Dlles Lacour at the time, and Naturelle Borne, niece of that wealthy attorney's housekeeper, or rather daughter of the two of them, so that these three ladies were witnesses to the apology, and took up my defence with so much warmth that my enemies were finally convinced that they had done me wrong. . . .

This happened on the 8th of May; for I went ahead of events to complete the story of my cousins' marriage without interruption, and must now go back to pick up what has been omitted.

The 8th of May was the last day of my apprenticeship. My parents had, it seemed, been notified by M. Parangon that he was releasing me some four months in advance of my time; for they arrived on the evening of the day before, bringing me a summer suit of coarse camlet; grey, with gold-laced buttons. So Ascension Day, 1755, was for me a day of intoxicating joy! (And the same day was to be even more extraordinary in 1756.) Madame Parangon was the first to compliment me: "Now you are your own master, Monsieur Nicolas." "But only to be the more completely at your command," I replied. Toinette, whom I saw next, congratulated me with tears in her eyes. "My dear, sweet girl," I said to her, "I shall very soon regret not living in the same house with you!" For, with the exception of the foreman, the workmen lodged in the town. . . . Then Bourgoin and Loiseau appeared. "Good day to you, colleague," said the foreman. "Good day, my new master!" said Loiseau. "Good day, my two friends! . . . Here I am a printer! But I am not sure . . . that I welcome this day. . . . I do not know if I would not rather be allowed to go my full time . . . or at least to the 14th of July, the day of my arrival." M. Parangon overheard me: "At least," he said smiling, "no one can say that this apprentice complains of his master, or of his apprenticeship. . . ." "Poor Loiseau!" continued Bourgoin, "now you will have to do all his special jobs." "I shall be honoured; Monsieur Nicolas has ennobled them." Then all the workmen arrived. Madame Parangon's friendship had won me their respect. I gave them breakfast at the house of M. Chambonnet, the dyer, where my father and mother were staying. M. Chambonnet was an old friend of my mother, and had been passionately in love with her when she was lady's maid to the Princesse d'Auvergne in Paris; but he could not have her as M. Boujat wanted her too, and his family was highly thought of in the district. Nevertheless he still held her in tender and virtuous affection, and this lasted all their lives; and he chose Barbe Ferlet's greatest friend for wife. He had a son by his second marriage, and I guided the boy's first steps to learning, improving my own mind at the same time. This had consolidated the traditional hospitality between Chambonnet and ourselves. He had always stayed at La Bretonne for the fairs at Noyers, Monbard, Vézelay or Vermenton. When breakfast was finished, my parents went to bid M. and Mme Parangon goodbye, and left in their trap at midday.

After dinner I went to La Mâris's ballroom, and there I found the sisters Ferrand, who seemed more kindly disposed to me than they had been since Colombe's departure. Amatre Guiller asked me to come and see Lenclos's wife, and I did not see how I could refuse, considering that

I had not met her since I had been a guest at her wedding. On our way we met another friend of the bride, Aurette Coquille, who told us that the poor young woman had just been beaten by her husband. We all three went up together. I gravely rebuked Lenclos, but his wife found excuses for him, for she loved him. Amatre also remonstrated with the scoundrel; but he only said that he would have been a good enough husband if he had married Amatre or Aurette. "I know you," exclaimed the latter. "You would love a woman fair as Venus for a week; that is to say, until you had played all your filthy tricks on her; for you have so befouled your wife that you cannot find a clean place in her to kiss. . . . But as you love him, my poor friend, and you are not disgusted as he himself is by his own filth, wash yourself, and above all your mouth. . . ." Then, uncovering her friend's breasts which were very white and finely shaped, she added: "Not one of us is as beautiful here as you are, and that should be enough to win a man's love. . . . But he has profaned this lovely breast." "Prove that she is more beautiful there than you two," said Lenclos; and, to my amazement, they unlaced without hesitation, and displayed their breasts, even allowing Lenclos to touch them. . . . Had he asked, I think they would have allowed him to see their other secret charms, if they had been inferior to those of their unhappy friend . . . for they displayed their legs above the knee in order to force Mme Lenclos to uncover hers, which were indeed so perfect that I have never seen their equal save in Madame Parangon and the younger Maris of the *Rue de la Vieille-Bouclerie.* I was astounded! But the beauty of their motive, which I could not doubt, made me admire these two girls! And I will mention here that I have never seen such prodigies of friendship as in this Canton of Lower Burgundy. . . . As a result Lenclos found his wife more attractive. . . .

That same evening I achieved *complete intimacy* with La Guigner, who took me home with her when we left Calais's ballroom.

On the 9th of May M. Parangon came upstairs to declare me journeyman printer, at the same time instructing Bardet and Tourangeot, my fellow prentices, to call me *Monsieur* in the future. I mention these trifles to depict the usages of the profession as they were still preserved in the provinces. But these customs are dying out everywhere now; and indeed one would be ashamed to use them with the brutes who have since debased the art of typography. . . . From the day that my apprenticeship ended, my luck seemed to desert me, as we shall see.

On Sunday, the 11th of May, I had a real debauch. After having eaten copiously in the little printing-room on the first floor with Loiseau, Bourgoin, Bardet, Tourangeot, J. Lelong, and even Toinette, I was left alone with Tourangeot, who had offered to find me lodgings. Just as we were leaving, three girls came in. They were the daughters of the clerk Durand, nicknamed Wryneck; he was a friend of M. Parangon, who needed his help for smuggling in contraband books, as no other agent would undertake this. Also another bond united them; M. Parangon looked after Durand's wife and daughters when the clerk was away. Tourangeot knew all about this libidinous intrigue, and had often acted as go-between. "Now if you want a good time, you can have it," he said, "for here come the Master's stopgaps. . . ." He brought them upstairs, fetched wine from M. Parangon's cellar, and invited them to drink and eat up the remains of our meal. Then he took the eldest, and possessed her in his little room next door, leaving everything wide open; and exhorted me to do as much with the second on Bardet's bed. At first I refused, but the little wanton, who had already been several times to Paris with her mother and shared in her debauches, provoked me to a fury of lust and I possessed her. . . . The third sister, a child of twelve, watched us; but Tourangeot told me that her mother and sisters had inured her to such scenes. Certainly she was shameless beyond imagination, for choosing a moment when the two elder girls were engaged with Tourangeot, who was saying and doing all sorts of obscenities to them, she came and sat on my knees and kissed me. I responded in kind, and then the little one said these very words: "Please take my virginity." "No, no, little wanton!" exclaimed the second sister. "No!" At this point Tourangeot shut her mouth for her with his teasing; and, as J. Lelong came in just then, the Tartar gave him the eldest. No scene in the houses of La Paris, La Montigny, La Gourdan, Le Guérin, La Dupont, or La Catiche* ever equalled the one in which I was now both actor and spectator. Tourangeot, formerly officer's servant (that tigrish breed which follows after armies), was so gorged with pleasure that he could do no more than pinch and bite, sometimes his own mount and sometimes Jean Lelong's. The women screamed and cursed. . . . I yielded at last to the provocations of the third and, frenzied by the difficulties I encountered, made her cry out as well. Even so I should never have succeeded had not the Tartar, who was up to every scurrilous trick, seized a piece of fresh butter which had escaped the voracious sisters, and anointed the child with it: thus she was immolated. . . . Would Madame Parangon have believed that she housed a blackguard capable of rendering such a service? . . .

While I was trembling for what I had done in the presence of so many witnesses, M. Parangon came in. He heard the noise in the lower printing room and the voices of girls . . . and came upstairs. This man never got drunk; but he was a little lighted up. Seeing me sitting near the youngest Durand, he said: "She's a dear little thing!" and chucked her under the chin. She pushed him away laughing; he caught hold of her, and I got up and slipped out quickly. When I reached the courtyard, I found J. Lelong and Tourangeot were on my heels. "You go out," said the latter, "but I must stay. On these occasions he often needs the sort of help I gave you; for he's a very different proposition to us! The girls tremble when they see him coming; the mother is the only person who is not afraid of him. . . ."

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*These were famous Parisian brothel-keepers of the eighteenth century. The affairs of La Gourdan, and her relations with the police have been fully investigated in recent years. [Ed.]

I never yielded to debauch without experiencing the pangs of remorse, and that day I suffered cruelly. Whereas a man like Tourangeot piled shame on shame, slavishly and without discrimination or remorse.

I went out to get some fresh air and, passing by Marianne Tangis's house, I saw her sitting in front of it alone. I bowed and she returned my salutation with a smile. I fled, with the inner feeling: "I am not worthy either to speak or listen to her." But at the bottom of her road, I saw the two sisters Pouillot, the hairdressers; the younger was pretty, and neither was too particular, so, feeling that I was their equal, I spoke to them. The three sisters Julien were passing at the moment, and the youngest called out to Cadette Pouillot: "Do not believe a word he says, Marine! *He has said it all to other girls!* He is a deceiver!" I kissed her as a punishment. "That's right, shut her mouth!" . . . said Cadette Pouillot. "But all the same, there's no need to be careful with us; we know how much to believe of what you say. Only sweet ingenuous simpletons like Aimée Julien take everything literally." Some other young men joined us and we went all together to Fiévé's ballroom. Here I found some of my late antagonists; but I went home after the dance alone and unmolested, though not without taking a few precautions. . . . I had already suffered some remorse, but my night was cruel! Just retribution for a day whereon I had betrayed my principles. . . . But that happens often enough. . . . Poor human race! I have only written this book to portray you at my own expense!

On the 16th, the feast of Saint-Pèlerin, I amused myself for a few hours at La Mâris's with the three sisters Ferrand and their aunt. They were very friendly to me; I do not know why, but it cannot have had anything to do with Colombe. They said something about her, and we shall see shortly what I suspected. . . . After supper I escorted the three sisters and their aunt to Fiévé's. Médérique Maufront was there with her brother, and she apologised for the conduct of the saddlers, who were also in the ballroom. She said, in a sufficiently loud voice, that she knew what I had said when I heard of the insult that had been put upon her, and also the advice that I had given to my friends, adding that, *without being aware of it, I had acted as she would have wished, as, if she had recognised any young townsmen, she would certainly not have mentioned their names, for the sake of their families. . . .* Her attitude gave me a great respect for her, and I expressed this in a way which completely cleared me of any guilty complicity: "I have always thought, Mademoiselle, that beauty of mind and soul are manifested in beauty of body – and of this, you are the proof." My compliment was greeted by universal applause, and it was this politeness, combined with a suavity of character, rather than of manners, which is natural to my family, that won the young men over to me; as for the girls, with a few exceptions my chief virtue in their eyes was that I danced well. . . . But during the disturbance which all this occasioned, the Ferrand family were talking apart. It was decreed that I should dance the first minuet with Médérique, and, in the course of it, I heard the Ferrands' aunt say: "Yes, it is a girl, and the mother is bringing her up. . . ." And as the dance brought me round again, I heard: "How can anyone know? She is married: she can have a child who dies." That was all I could pick up, and afterwards they evaded all my questions. It was only long after that I found out that my suspicions were well founded.

The 18th of May, as we have seen, was the day on which my two cousins arrived, and I will not pass on from this to the date on which I concluded the story of their double wedding, until I have glanced quickly over the incidents which, in the interval, drew me to Rose again, and have completed the story of my adventure with this girl.

I was beginning to dislike the ballrooms. One day I found Gaudet at La Mâris's with five or six servants: as we know, he preferred this sort of girl to ladies. The sisters Ferrand withdrew from the ballroom, as Durand Sougères made them doubtful of the company: so that, as I could not persuade the three sisters to come and dance with me, I carried off Aglaé, somewhat as *Boreas* ravished away *Orithyia.* "As I am your captive," she said, "it is only fair that I should dance; but it will be for the last time." I went home early.

The same evening I had a conversation with Rose, but of so little importance, that I only find a Latin note of it, which in translation reads as follows: "I forgot to say that I had a conversation to-day with my very dear Rose, while Colombat was trifling with Annette Bourdeaux. . . . I love her more than ever. . . . Dear girl! Love him who loves you, and leave the rest to the Gods. . . ."

Whit Sunday was the last day on which I was to have my meals in the house which had become like home to me. Apparently this was against Madame Parangon's desire, but she was obliged to yield to the clearly expressed wishes of her husband, who was freeing Tourangeot at the same time so that the two favourites, the one of the wife, the other of the husband, could leave the house together. . . . Colette said nothing to me personally about this change in my way of life, but she instructed Toinette to tell me *that we would not be separated, as we should see each other every day; that she begged me not to speak of my departure to her unless she mentioned it first; that she hoped I would not go to a place like Anieli's, but to M. Palé's boarding house, or to M. Briand with Tréisignies, or to some respectable family, unless I preferred to take a room and let Toinette look after me.* I sent this reply by the messenger, *that I was deeply grateful, but that, since I could not remain in her house, as it was the custom for workmen to live in lodgings, I would choose an honest simple and united family, and, directly my cousins were married, would board with them. Until then I implored M. and Mme Parangon to let me have my meals with them as an apprentice.* . . . Madame Parangon approved of my answer, and Toinette came back and told me: "Madame is very sad; her eyes are all red; but she smiled when she heard your answer: 'Run, my Toinette' (these were her very words), 'and tell him that his plan is better than any of mine. . . .' So you are to stay till after your cousins' marriage, and then you can lodge with them." Now we come to Rose.

On the 25th of May, as I was leaving the house to go and see old M. Servigné, I caught sight of Mlle Lambelin at her door. I joined her and we talked together until half-past eight. On the 26th I exclaim in my notebook: "May the gods grant that I see my dearly beloved again this evening! . . ." I had my wish, and Rose was a little harsh with me; but as we were parting, she said: "How cruel it is to have to speak and act against the impulse of the heart! . . ." On the evening of the 29th I did not see Rose; so I amused myself by talking to Burat's mistress, Julie; Marianne Linard, who later married a bookseller in Semur; Jeannette Geolin, afterwards wife of Jean Lelong, our servant at this time but now a printer in Paris; and Rosalie de la Rupelle, a pretty brunette whom I met for the first time at close quarters on this occasion. Rosalie's real name was Agathe Laurent, but it had been changed when she went into service with young Mme de la Rupelle. In the same way when Mme d'Avigneau took a fancy to Maufront after her misfortune and insisted on having her, Médérique became Julie. I had never had Agathe, but I had Rosalie that very evening, after Burat had got rid of the other three girls. We were caught by Mme de la Rupelle, who scolded her maid severely, but congratulated me: "Accept my compliments; you are to be envied for knowing how to wrest the ultimate favour from a pretty girl, whom many a smarter lad has pursued in vain!" I tried to hear what they said after I had left. . . . Rosalie stated that I had violated her by making her "swoon." Her mistress burst out laughing . . . and forgave her on condition that she never spoke to me again.

On Friday, the 30th, I joined Rose after supper; and Colombat, who was with me, was unkind enough not to leave us alone. He noticed something or other in Rose's manner which intrigued him. Also he was waiting for Annette, who never came.

On the evening of Saturday, the 31st, I was talking quietly alone with Rose; she pointed to Annette and Colombat, who were sitting in the midst of their families, each yawning harder than the other: "What an amusing time they are having!" she remarked. (Her mother was listening behind the half-door; but we did not know that.) "Let them be," I answered. "They would be too happy without such little annoyances!" "Annoyances? Two respectable families? You call that an annoyance?" "That is not quite what I meant: but they are both young and amiable and sure of each other, and if they could open their tender hearts freely they would enjoy the peaceful and happy loves that I have always longed for. . . ." At this point Mme Lambelin coughed. She came out immediately after, looking very stern, and ordered her daughter indoors.

After dinner on Sunday, the 1st of June, I saw the Dlles Lacour sitting outside their door with Maîne Lebègue, Loiseau, the Tangis boy, and Lacour. The young ladies received me coldly; and upon my saying *that a decent man should never mislead a girl, but should warn her in good time not to count on him for fear of making her unhappy* . . . the younger Lacour said: "I always knew that you were incredible!" (The same phrase has often since been repeated to me; but I cannot recall that, on any of the occasions referred to, the fault was on my side.) Maîne took up my defence: "Do not condemn him without a hearing," she said. "Without a hearing?" demanded the elder sister. "Are you trying to suggest anything against Marianne?" "Against Marianne!" exclaimed Maîne. "She is the sweetest and most virtuous girl I know; I am far from saying anything against her! Marianne has done nothing wrong; but Monsieur Loiseau states that his friend is not to blame either. We must make him explain this by and by." "Then we shall see," said the younger. "No, I am not to blame," I said, approaching them. "I respect the younger Mademoiselle Tangis beyond measure, and Mademoiselle Lebègue knows it well; but I was obliged . . . that is the word . . . obliged to withdraw. . . . And that being the case, would you have had me . . ." "Then you shouldn't have . . ." began the younger Lacour sharply. I interrupted her: "Listen all three of you before you condemn me, and repeat anything of what I say that you think fit to Marianne. . . . When I saw this sweet girl, I was charmed by her, and pursued her without reflection; my heart was caught before I was aware, and I sought her company in spite of myself. However, reflection brought me to myself, and I withdrew. . . . But I beseech you, Mesdemoiselles, let Marianne still think I treated her badly; let her believe me light and frivolous, so that indignation at my conduct may give her back that repose which I have never recovered! . . . It is just that I should suffer alone. That sweet, gentle girl should not be made a victim of the painful position . . . into which I have been forced." "Ah, there he goes again, putting me on his side!" said the younger Lacour. . . . "There, there, I am sorry for little Marianne, because she loves you; but I do not want her to think badly of you: I know by experience that that is too hard, and that a decent girl would rather mourn for a lover who has deserted her, than despise him."

Just then Annette Bourdeau passed by, and I do not think she had ever looked prettier; she shone like a beautiful rose. I bowed to her, and she returned my greeting with a slight blush, which made her even lovelier. "What a charming person!" exclaimed the three ladies. The men admired her in silence. It occurred to me that one could not have found a more perfect image of Mlle Fanchette; and even that there was something more limpid in Annette's colouring, something nobler about her features. Full of this idea, I ran after Annette, and said to her: "Young nymph, you are so beautiful that I fear lest you be carried off by some Satyr, or by the Cyclops of the Paris Gate." (A goat-herd and an edge-tool-maker lodged one on either side of this gate.) "Permit me to protect you against attack." "I am not sorry to have a neighbour's escort through this quarter, where I am not known," she answered. "My elder brother was to have come with me, but he is amusing himself elsewhere." I gave her my arm to the house of the chief exciseman, M. *Depincemaille*, in the Rue des Jésuites. As she only stayed there a moment, I waited and brought her back. Thus we found the three lovers and their mistresses still sitting outside the Lacours' door. The elder Bourdeau appeared at the same moment on his way to join his sister; so I handed Annette over to him, and sat down beside the younger Lacour. "What, is that how you leave a pretty girl who has just taken your arm so familiarly?" "There is nothing to be surprised at," I answered, seeing perfectly well the sort of idea that the Dlles Lacour and their brother and Tangis had of me. "I am her betrothed's most intimate friend." "Her betrothed!" "Yes, a very nice young man whom you know. Everything has been settled for more than a year; but their people do not want them to marry so young. Mademoiselle Annette knows that her intended honours me with his confidence and that he has no secrets from me; and for this reason, I am, perhaps, the only young man in the town, except for her brother, with whom she is so unconstrained. . . . Besides, her only alternative was to return home or wait for her brother with us, as she could not, at her age, go alone to a houseful of clerks and offices." "Ah, that is quite another story!" said young Lacour. Tangis was listening very attentively. He had been giving me the cold shoulder, but now he became a little more cordial. I felt that I must not stay longer; my good genius was urging me towards Marianne, but at the time I mistook it for a bad genius. Colombat appeared most opportunely for my purpose: "We have seen a charming acquaintance of yours," I said to him. "She was kind enough to accept my arm from here to the house of M. Depincemaille, and back again; I have just handed her over to her eldest brother." "Mademoiselle Annette?" he exclaimed impulsively. "Herself," said Maîne Lebègue, "and she is charming!" "She is perfectly beautiful," added the Dlles Lacour. Colombat bridled so evidently at these praises that anyone could have guessed he was engaged to the girl; and he was congratulated. He denied the soft impeachment, but a moment later was thanking me with a proprietary air for my courtesy to the young lady, adding that I "must give him his revenge." I begged him in a whisper to get me away, and this he managed very adroitly, by pretending that he wanted me to help him with some verses *in honour of a certain Saint in the month of July!* . . . He put his arm round my waist and dragged me away; and I heard the younger Lacour say: "They will make a handsome couple, but the man looks a bit pale!"

We went to tell Annette all the compliments that had been lavished upon her. . . . She was playing battledore and shuttlecock with her neighbour Rose in front of Mme Chouin's door. Annette in a white house-frock was a shepherdess, a jewel; whereas Rose, tall, well-made, rather plump and white as a lily, presented another type of beauty in her sky-blue frock; she was a graceful nymph, a vigorous companion of Diana: from behind, one would have admired the brunette more than the blonde. "Look at our mistresses," said Colombat. "One could find girls with worse figures." The two young people stopped their game as we approached, but, while I talked to the fair Annette, my burning glances were telling Rose that I found her the more seductive. And they spoke truly. Her figure, her youth, her leg modelled by the Graces, her supple shapely foot, the warmth which animated her pallor to the hue of roses, the rise and fall of her half-veiled breast of alabaster, all these made plainness preferable to beauty. . . . After I had told Annette what had been said about her, Rose gave me her racquet, saying: "Take my place." I played with Annette, and tired her much less than Rose had, because, as I was an excellent player, I sent her easy returns. "Oh, how I love playing with you!" said the pretty blonde. "Quite right!" said the townsman Pochet, who happened to pass. "But I seem to recognise your young spark. I warn you, my beauty, you are not the only one he plays with. . . . Take my hint." Then, touching me on the shoulder: "Is she your cousin too?" "No, I have not that honour; but she is the grand-niece of my curé." "Always some relation! . . . I do not know you, my lad, but you seem to hunt fur and feather! . . . But we have gamekeepers, and I advise you . . ." This remark made Annette laugh; she had not the slightest interest in me personally, and amused herself by teasing me about my mistresses, whom I always passed off as cousins. . . . But where was Rose? And where was Colombat, who had disappeared a few minutes after her? This must be told.

Rose had a temperament of fire, as have all plain women (from what I have observed) who are quick-witted and well formed, and she was beginning to fall in love with me. My hair was becomingly dressed that day, and we know how much that can improve the face! After she had listened to me and read in my glances all that I meant them to express, she felt an urgent physical desire for me. She went up into a first-floor room, whence she could see me from the window (for I was at the lower end of the road), and watched us playing from behind the curtain. Colombat, always up to some trick or other, saw her at the window and, having nothing better to do, slipped into the room right behind her, where he saw and heard . . . what he described to me later.

When it was too dark to play any longer, Annette and I sat down with Rose (who had come down again almost at once) and Colombat (who had preceded her); they had been chatting together while we were putting away the racquets. . . . We were joined by Burat's Julie and Mme Chouin, Mme Durand the hatmaker and her sister, a charming person from Tonnerre; the younger Bourdeaux, *Usonne* or *Eusébie Nombret,* another of Antoine Foudriat's grand-nieces and sister of that Nombret I used to know at Sacy in my childhood, and finally by Manon Prudhôt, and we began a little game of forfeits. In the intervals of the game, Annette repeated Pochet's remarks, with her own comments, as Rose and Colombat had not managed to catch them all. At every word, I pressed Rose's white hand, to make her understand that Pochet was referring to her. Apparently she did not disdain her conquest. Manon Prudhôt left us at half-past nine, and Mme Bourdeaux called her daughter home. I said goodnight to Rose, wishing her in a whisper *the sweet and quiet sleep I could not hope for; the pleasant dreams that were not for me.* I was going away slowly with Colombat, when I heard Rose's little sister say that their mother had not yet come in. Rose was leaning over the half-door, and I turned back alone. I implored her to come and sit on the stone bench outside the potter's door, and, emboldened by the solitude and darkness, she consented. Rose playing at battledore and shuttlecock had enchanted me, and I forgot myself. Before I had only loved her quick mind; now I had found charms and allurements in her and my sense of touch was subjugated by her soft and dimpled hands. In a word, Rose was beautiful in the dim light which softened all that was harsh in her, and showed only the outlines of her form, leaving to the sense of touch only its full discriminative delicacy. . . . I trembled with voluptuous emotion. . . . If I had known that evening what Colombat told me next morning, I should no doubt . . . and with the views I then held, I should have been lost. . . . Rose listened to my murmured gallantries with half-closed eyes and seemingly much agitated, one hand upon my thigh, the other hidden! "I adore you," I said, clasping her round the waist. "I am sorry!" she stammered, and with a deep sigh, relaxed a little in my arms. Thus subtly did she work by contradictions. Then, as though coming to herself with a start, she darted a dazzling glance at me out of her great black eyes, then closed them again, and I began kissing her; she did no more than move uneasily, almost convulsively, under my kisses. . . . At last she heard her mother's step, and with a deep sigh, she murmured: "Go . . . go . . . my . . . I fear she will scold me! . . ." I slipped away under the sheltering eaves, and Rose went indoors.

This was the beginning, properly speaking, of the curious passion which this intelligent girl aroused in me. Up till now love had sprung from tenderness or desire, or the two combined; sometimes I had written verses to the object of my passion; but it was a passing ebullition. With Rose on the contrary, I felt neither tenderness strictly speaking, nor violent desire; but she generated a mania for rhyme and prose. Every morning I wrote verses to her and a letter every evening when work was done; I used to give her the packet after supper, often swelled by some song for which she had asked me. I found the extremest pleasure in writing to her; in her case it was to me what possession was with other women: in writing to her and in receiving her letters (for she wrote to me later), I enjoyed her in, for me, the most voluptuous manner. All my conduct goes to prove this; for I do not write of fancies. The woman who was most a woman to me, who inspired tenderness, devotion, burning desire, interest and respect in equal measure, was Colette; and no other woman has ever roused my tenderness and desire in the same degree. . . . When I come to my adoration of Zéphire, my Zéphire whom I loved so exquisitely, who was so worthy to be loved, my tenderness for her will be as great as for Colette; but desire was feeble and would, perhaps, never have woken save for her provocative caresses. . . .

My letters and verses began on June the 2nd. All my letters are lost: Rose kept them, even after her marriage; but her younger sister, a pious, ugly woman, burned them after the poor girl's death in 1765. She died at Paris, whither she had come to live with her husband, a second-hand clothes dealer, of some trouble after a lying-in. But as verses are rarely composed without erasures, I used to write these out first in my fifth Note-Book, and then make a clean copy; so I still have a large number, which have escaped being torn out and all those other accidents which have destroyed or damaged the others. My first verses were in acrostic form; I was well acquainted with the excellent impression made by this on the Beauties of the neighbourhood, and I never failed to begin with it: it was a sort of frontispiece. The poem is torn but I can remember it:

June 2nd, 1755. To MADEMOISELLE ROSE LAMBELIN

> *After far straying drawn back within your toils, O beauty too entrancing without aid from art, I submit myself to you, I am your captive; and thus obey the laws of Nature. Let us unite our hearts, let us court danger: let all our desires and all our glances be devoted to the expression of our fond tenderness; and may love for ever burn, the mistress of our hearts! Fair Rose of love, I openly confess that I, poor clown, had thought to love you and still be free and at my ease. No doubt nor fear troubled my thick head. Too late, I see how wrong I was.*

The verses are abominable, and yet Rose, clever Rose, found them tolerable! "Too good a poet makes but a poor lover," she said, smiling. Where had she learned that? At the Benedictines.

I find my verses for June the 2nd in my note-book, but those from the 3rd to 10th inclusive have been torn out. On the evening of the 2nd, Rose went indoors directly after I had delivered my prose and verse. Colombat, who had come to say goodnight to young Annette, joined me and we went for a walk together. "You have never asked what became of me yesterday while you were playing with Mademoiselle Annette," he said. "No. Why should I?" "Ah, because I am longing to tell you." "All right, go ahead. I am listening." "I went into the house and into Rose's room. She was standing at the window, watching you, and talking to herself, and wriggling and moving her body about. I thought she was murmuring sweet nothings to you! She was flushed at first; then she gave a great sigh, and sat absolutely still, except that she stretched out her legs and stiffened them as though she were in pain." I only asked one question: the whereabouts of her hand, and Colombat's answer, the significance of which he did not appreciate, told me all I wanted to know. I fell into a deep reverie. This incident increased my love for Rose, and even lightly stirred desire, as the West wind ruffles the quiet surface of the sea. . . . But where did Rose learn to do that? . . . At the Benedictines.

I saw Rose next evening and had no difficulty in giving her my prose and verse. . . . Only half of the latter are missing from my Quintus Codex. Here are a few lines:

> *Sweet Iris, I was wretched when I left you yesterday; I was no longer myself. A fierce consuming fire followed in my track wherever I went: my blood ran crazily through my veins, now a mad torrent and now a sluggish stream. I was amazed at the strangeness of my pain! Too adorable girl, you have pierced my heart with your all-conquering shaft, and it is now your prisoner!*

This kind of rubbish always pleases a girl who is in love, even if she is intelligent. What I had heard from Colombat made me very amorous, and it seemed to me that Rose was even more so. She was a girl of fire. She was about eighteen at this time, strong and vigorous; she had just left the convent, and now led a quiet, idle life, only working to amuse herself. Did I but press her hand, she grew pale and her voice changed tone. . . . But she was mistress of herself and of the artifice which was natural to her, and which originated, it must be admitted, in necessity. For she knew that she was not beautiful; but she had youth and freshness, and a skin like satin; in a word she had enough to be attractive; and she wanted to take advantage of her youthful charms to get a husband whom she loved, and who could satisfy an insatiable temperament. She had long favoured me, by reason of certain rumours which inevitably got abroad after my adventure with Madelon Baron; but I passed for inconstant: Manon Prûdhot, Colombe, and Marianne Tangis, were not unknown in a small town. Also she knew that I was thinking of Mlle Fanchette; but, as she had not the information necessary to realise how important this match was to me, she set about fixing my affections on herself by every possible means. She mentioned the houses and vineyards owned by her parents at Irancy; she let me hold her dimpled hand; she let me touch her cheeks with my mouth and flush their lilies with my burning lips; she allowed these lips to cling to hers and open to her pure breath. . . . But afterwards she would exacerbate my passion by opposing it; she would appear dissatisfied with me (and doubtless she really was dissatisfied). Such were her methods; and if they were not as successful as she expected, it was because my inmost heart was already captive, or because the prospect of a marriage too flattering to be abandoned made me proof against her wiles; for Rose was made to vanquish obstacles unless they were insuperable. . . .

I left Rose on the 3rd of June drunk with love . . . or admiration. For all her remarks were tender yet modest, brief yet expressive: I had never found her like, not even in Madelon, still less in Manon Prudhôt; neither did Edmée or Colombe resemble her. As for Marianne Tangis, she would not have been herself if she had had Rose's cunning, but had such a thing been possible, I think she would have won me, that is unless I had been actually married to Fanchette.

The 4th of June passed and the 5th, but I have forgotten my verses up to the 10th.

On the 5th, 6th, and 7th I was in Sacy, on business connected with my cousins. I talked a lot about Rose to my mother, but only as of a very intelligent girl. I must have exhausted her patience at last, for she said: "I have heard many clever girls talk, and in Paris itself, but I never heard one who reasoned so well and so wisely, so sensibly and so modestly as Mlle Fanchette; and it should have been you who said that to me. Oh, how I ought to love and honour Madame Parangon, for she is very indulgent to my son!" I was ashamed.

On the evening of the 7th I saw Rose again. I asked for her hand, wanting her to give this phrase the significance it has in novels. She gave me her hand, saying: "It is yours." I shuddered involuntarily. (Was she the greatest misfortune that could happen to me? Ah, I found a much worse than Rose!)

On the 8th Rose was forced to take up my defence against her mother, who said that I was a rake. (What a libel! For so I considered it. I thought I was very well-behaved; and I really was so, compared with my friends and the other workmen, unprincipled fellows all, scamps of the type described in connection with Médérique Maufront.) "A rake!" exclaimed Rose. "Ah, dear mother, then be present when we talk; listen to him, and advise me. Whether you find you are mistaken, or show me that I am, in either case, I shall owe you more than life itself." "Rose, you speak and reason beyond your years," answered her mother. "I tremble for you, my child! . . . Do not see Monsieur Nicolas any more! I could forbid it; but, instead, I ask you!" Rose threw herself at her mother's feet, saying: "Alas, then I shall be miserable! . . . But would it not be better, mother dear, if you watched him?" "Very well, I will. . . . But what I know of him, I have on a respectable authority . . . Monsieur Salomon, our pastor." Now Rose loathed the curé of Saint-Renobert, because he had discovered a little intrigue which she had contrived before I knew her, with Brother Boulanger the Cordelier, and the mention of him made her furious. But she kept her wits about her: she attacked the curé, on the grounds that he had spoken against her mother and was always intriguing, etc. Rose's mother was a resolute woman, but she yielded to her daughter, saying: "Then I will be present at your evening talks. Monsieur Nicolas does not come in the daytime, and I forbid you to speak to him should you meet in the town." "That I promise, Mamma: nothing is so unbecoming or has such a plebeian flavour as talking to a young man in the street, or to any man for that matter."

Consequently Mamma made a third in our party on Sunday the 8th, and on Monday and Tuesday. So Rose had to fall back on other means to give significance to our indifferent and intermittent talk, and used her hand, or pressed her knee against mine, or put her pretty foot on my foot, to convey what was in her mind. . . . I had no chance to get my verses to her.

On the 11th I found a way to deliver my verses for that day and the day before: for a lover can profit by the most trifling circumstance. Here are the verses:

> *I sought in your bright eyes, my charming Aminta, the present cure of all my ills: but alas, with tender artifice the traitors slipped Love's poison into my heart! Great God! How sweet and happy a deceit, which rends the heart to give it life!*

Voltaire would have done better, but Mlle Pimpette could not have received his good verses more graciously than Rose received my bad ones.

That same day a decaying beam had been removed from a house in the *rue Notre-Dame*, and when night fell it was phosphorescent. Colombat, who lived in the same street, ran to fetch his mistress, and Mme Bourdeaux allowed Annette and her little sister to go with him. He brought back the fair Annette adorned with diamonds; he had artistically sewn her beautiful hair with the shining wood, so that she illuminated all who came near her. Rose was lost in admiration, and longed for some of the shining wood; but her mother would not let me take her. I asked permission timidly. "I would have consented," she answered, "if you had spoken when Colombat was taking Annette and her sister." "You are right, Madame, and my request was indiscreet." I got up at once, ran to the place, and detached some particularly luminous wood from the beam; this I brought to Rose, and gave her so skilfully that no one saw me do it. Then I sat down again beside her mother. Rose joined Mlle Annette and her sister, who were only ten paces off as the two shops were in the same house, and with their help arranged the shining wood in her hair until her head was absolutely covered, and she had even more "diamonds," as they called them, than Annette. Thus illuminated, the two young girls walked up and down in front of the assembled neighbours, who were astounded by this novel adornment. They thought it must be glow worms, but could not conceive how the girls had procured such a number. "Annette has given Rose some of her brilliants," Mme Lambelin remarked. "But how could my proud Rose ask for such a childish toy?" I said nothing. "I warrant you fetched her some of the wood?" I owned up frankly. "You are clever," she said, "for I never saw you give it to her; and I see that if you wanted to write letters, you could trick me just as easily. . . . You write to her, do you not? . . . I say you, because Rose understands her duty too well to answer, and I do not suspect her of it." If I had foreseen that my confession would have led to this question, I should never have made it! . . . I hedged: "I may have written a few verses, but they were returned to me." "After they had been read, no doubt?" "I do not know. . . ." I was seething with anxiety to escape and warn Rose, and I could have eaten Colombat for staring idiotically at me without calling me. (He was quite unaware of my painful position, but never had he seemed such a fool to me.) I think at last he guessed what I wanted; for he cried: "Nicolas, Nicolas, come here!" I was with him in one stride; and, paying no attention to what he was saying, warned Rose so adroitly that I never even seemed to speak to her. "I love quick-witted people," she answered. Then I attended to Colombat, but as he had nothing important to say, we went back to Rose's mother, and talked in front of her. I was overjoyed to have warned my mistress, and my relief made me talk well; I made Mme Lambelin smile several times, and even Colombat found me amusing. At last Rose went back with Annette, and they dropped their diamonds into Mme Chouin's lap; then they wrapped them in paper, not knowing that the wood would dry and, with its moisture, lose its brilliance, as fragile as their beauty, . . . She went indoors with my verses and my letter.

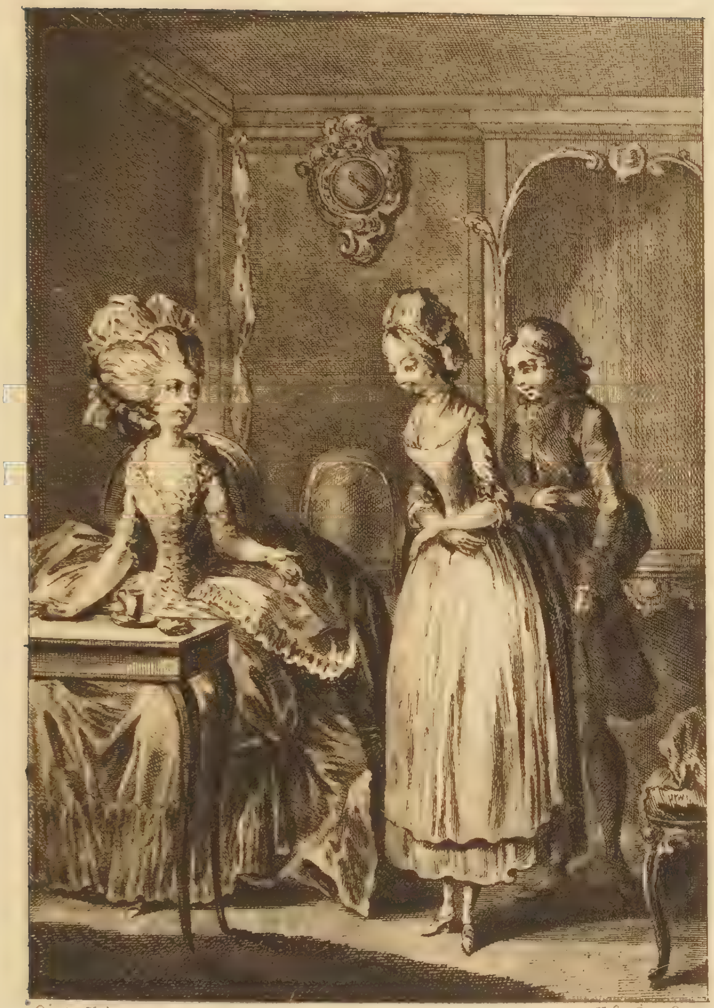
Thursday, the 12th, was an unlucky day, and all the Thursdays after it: no doubt because I hinted at this lover-like superstition to Rose, reft from me by her mother; for love, like all religions, cherishes and thrives on superstition. Pretty kind Mme Chouin (later I was to adore Victoire Londo, her niece, and very like her), whom I have mentioned little though she was always up and doing for us, comforted me before I could complain: "You will see her again!" Then I no longer restrained myself, but, for the sake of being comforted, bewailed my lot like a child left alone by its mother. I had shown some dignity with my other mistresses, especially with Marianne Tangis; but with Rose I behaved like a child. Why was that? I think because in love, as in the home, the cleverer the woman, the more futile the man. Poem of the 12th:

> *My love for you, fair Iris, is longer than my life and will defy the decrees of envious Fate, through whom all changes come. Bowing before the triumphant shafts hurled at me from so dear a Beauty's eyes, ravished, I welcome Love into my soul.*
>
> *As the Sun, father of the light, burns with an eternal flame, so will this fire called Love burn for you, Iris, in me.*

I had a very happy evening with Rose on the 13th and said many tender things to her. But I had not been able to find time for any verses; so, making the best of things, I flourished empty hands throughout the evening for the benefit of Mme Lambelin, who was watching me. But Rose made it clear that she did not like negligence or forgetfulness. However, I assured her that it was neither of these, but work which had stolen the hour consecrated to her. "I shall never be jealous of work as a rival," she answered, "but it must be the only one." I went in to Mme Chouin's and wrote the following quatrain, which I asked her to give to Rose with the verses of the day before.

> *Ah, magic memory of those always so sweet moments which I pass with my adored one: alas! if my senses may no longer feel their rapture, do thou, sweet memory, still enchant them!*

On the 14th my youngest sister arrived from Paris (that unhappy girl who has since brought such grief upon her family!). Her appearance



Binet Inv. — Jn Le Roy Sculp.

impressed me unfavourably; but I tried to blind myself to this. Verses for the 14th:

> *What happiness is mine! Only this morning, sweet Iris, I was bemoaning my ill-fortune! But the boy Love, father of the fond passion, quickly saw what ailed me, and turned my heart to the enchanting object of its tender adoration. And not content with that, this most charming of Gods let me see her thrice at midday, to warm me at the fire of her bright eyes.*

On Sunday the 15th, I took my sister home in a carriage. Tourangeot came with us to see my parents for the second time. I did not introduce *Cadette* to Madame Parangon, and was well scolded for it! . . . I came back the same evening, bringing some roses for her who bore their name. "Ah, how exquisite they smell!" said Rose. "Love took them from the hands of Flora." "And I take them from the hands of Love." "I always loved the rose," I continued, "and for several weeks now, I have loved it alone." "Then I am not surprised that these are so fresh, so perfumed, since every rose is your sweetheart!" For this, I pressed her hand, and she responded to my pressure; and my whole soul went out into my hand and was joined to that of Rose. How far was my quatrain, written hurriedly on my arrival, from expressing what I then experienced!

> *To-day when I removed from your charms, fair Iris, I left sorrowfully the place where my heart remained. My eyes, turned backed towards it, would have dissolved in tears; but Love promised my conqueror to me for the evening.*

The 16th of June was one of those days which, through excess of happiness, leave an ineffaceable impression. I was writing prose and verse every day to Rose; here is the day's poem:

> *Yes, charming Iris, every moment I feel that my happiness is in you, and in you my life; and if I were denied the solace of your conversation I should soon*

> *die of weariness. Even when absent from you, a thousand times I vow an unending passion for you. You fill my senses, my thoughts are all of you, and every thought accompanied by a sigh. Ah, too happy moments, when my dazed, enchanted soul, can find nought but dumb sighs to express its rapture in the object of my devotion! The more your sweet passion charms my soul, the stronger the decree which stifles my voice!*

And at last the Beauty thus celebrated answered me; and I received the first love-letter I had ever had from a woman. If writing to her was a pleasure, to receive her answer, to see her thoughts traced on paper whereon her beautiful hand had rested, was a deification, a veritable apotheosis! She was sharing the pleasure she had given me! This my first written word from her was not a letter strictly speaking. In the preceding year, she had promised me a song written in her own hand, and every day I used to urge her to give it to me. At last, on the 16th, after receiving my two trifles, she slipped a paper into my hand. I was almost anxious to leave her, so as to read it; and I was quickly gratified, as her mother ordered her indoors before half-past nine. I took my treasure to Gaudet's office, to find an insipid, commonplace song about a girl's regrets before taking the vows, set to an air as trivial as the words were dragging and dull. I was amazed that so clever a girl should have given me a song fit only for the mouths and ears of servants; and, dissatisfied, I did not deign to read it through. Then it occurred to me that it was unnatural for Rose to give me seriously such a song! So I read it verse by verse – but not a word of what I had hoped to find (for I had flattered myself that one of them might be a parody, and contain her sentiments within the verse's rhymes). But when I reached the end, I saw some writing so faint as to be scarcely legible. I held it against the light, and could then see a haphazard collection of letters which could not be grouped and divided into words. Here they are: for as I know what they mean, and such things are never forgotten, I can set them down just as they were written at the foot of the song: V d q v m a j v a é a s v ê a t q j l d j s l p h f d m m n s j i j m d d . I reflected, I turned and transposed them. At last I realised that they were only initials, and little by little I constructed the following sentence: *"Vous dites que vous m'aimez! . . . Je vous aime également. Ah! si vous êtes aussi tendre que je le désire, je suis la plus heureuse fille du monde! . . . Mais ne soyez jamais infidèle; j'en mourrais de douleur!"*[*] I was enraptured by my divination; and left Gaudet, drunk with joy and singing like a lunatic:

The whole earth is mine!

In the course of my wanderings, I saw d'Arras's fellow monk, Brother Boulanger, getting in on the quiet through the gate which Brother Jean, the porter, had left ajar for him. I showed him my piece of writing (it was a beautiful script, and possibly he recognised it as Rose had been in love with him) and asked him to decipher the isolated letters, regarding them as initials. He thought for a few minutes . . . then he read: "Vilain diable, qui veux m'aborder, je vais appeler."[†] I burst out laughing. "Isn't that right?" he said, breaking off. Then he went on to the end in this scurrilous vein, and fitted the letters to a marvel! . . . Finally Loiseau happened to pass and his interpretation did not square with mine, so that I was left in a state of doubt which held my joy in suspense. This was his version: *"Volage! qui dites que vous m'adorez, je vous ai étudié avec soin; vous êtes audacieux trompeur. . . ."*[‡] "Stop, executioner of my heart!" I exclaimed. "Do not steal away my illusion!" And I fled with my paper. . . .

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[*] "You say that you love me! . . . I love you too. Ah, if you are as fond as I desire, I am the happiest girl in the world! . . . But never be unfaithful; I should die of grief!"

[†] "Ugly devil who would accost me, I shall call. . . ."

[‡] "Light-of-love! you say you adore me, but I have studied you carefully: you are a bold deceiver. . . ."

I will only quote the first verse of the song Rose gave me:

'Tis love is all my smart;
Alas! that love should gall
One who wears out her heart
Within a convent wall!
My lover at the grill:
"Sweet, listen to my cry!"
" — No, I'll be maiden still,"
Was my reply.

On the first opportunity I replied to Rose's song with one that rivalled it for monotony and triviality:

Let us escape from the heat of the day and sit down in the shade: all about us the birds will chant their praises of your beauty and of my faithfulness.

Shepherd, I am very willing; but you must promise to be good and if you want me, not claim more than my companionship. I go with you, trusting in your good faith.

If I had known what you intended, and that you meant to play the traitor! . . . What! You kiss my breast! You take away my neckerchief! Alas, you are rummaging me! But I will never consent!

I have no power to resist your onslaughts: will you not have done? Life is leaving me! Look! Can you not see my friends down there?

A secret lover knows his business well: the most perilous moments are the happiest ones: we two are alone here; defend yourself if you can.

I do not know what Rose thought of this song, but she did not forget it.

On the 17th I asked Rose to interpret the letters. "I will tell you to-morrow," she said. Then her mother called her, and she could say no more. But she slipped a little roll of paper into my hand, and I gave her my song. Her mother could have seen all this: was there any understanding between them? I do not know. . . . I hastened to read the little paper at Mme Chouin's, and found what follows:

> *"Suov setid euq suov zemia'm: ej suov emia tnemelagé: Ah! is suov setê issua erdnet euq ej el eriséd, ej sius al sulp esuerueh ellif ud ednom! . . . Siam en zeyos siamaj elèdifni! ne'j siarruom ed rueluod!"**

I rejoiced immoderately, on finding my interpretation thus confirmed by Rose herself, and went in to Mme Chouin's to write the following verses, which I hoped to be able to deliver the same evening:

> *I was puzzled, sweet object of my love, to read the meaning of your riddle; but that adorable child, fond Love, came to my help: "Ah, Tircis," he said, "it is the cure for all your ills! See, faithful lover, Iris loves you in her turn! Look, take this letter and put it first, and then take this and put it last. . . ." He was going on, but I interrupted him. . . . Oh charming words! Can my entrancing Iris hold your meaning in her heart? Alas! Dare I match* I love *with* I am loved*? . . . My heart's passion for you is undying; sweet Iris, I love you; I could lose every drop of my blood, and my ardent love would still endure. My heart is drowned in pleasure now; a hundred times I read my Iris's confession, drenching it with kisses and joyful tears. These words have brought me all my heart's desire.*

But as Mme Chouin's husband came in, I was obliged to put off giving them until next day.

At midday on the 18th I met Rose in the *Rue Saint-Renobert*, on her way back from taking her little sister Thérèse's dinner to school. I gave her my verses of the 17th, and with them Madelon Baron's song:

Oh, for an undissembling heart.

Fortunately this last was on a separate sheet; for, as I was giving it to her, the wretched Pochet, who was again at his lower window, slipped out a sly hand, seized it and read it. Rose had my verses, and I thought I saw another paper in her hand; but she fled. . . . "Oh, this is too much!" said

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*See note * p. 313. It is perhaps unnecessary to point out that Rose reverses each word in her message. [Ed.]

Pochet, handing me back my song. "Brunettes or blondes, tall or short, pretty girls or girls who are not pretty, all is fish that comes to his net! Letters and annotated songs and appointments, and . . . I shall warn people against you, young fellow!" I smiled at him, and putting a finger to my lips, I escaped. . . . I was not mistaken in thinking that there was a paper in Rose's hand; that evening she gave me a long letter. I was so overjoyed by this pretty letter (for Rose wrote as never woman has written, save perhaps the impressionable *Beauharnais* or the elegant *Riccoboni*),* that I was obliged to go and vent my raptures on the Ile d'Amour before going indoors. I deeply regret this charming letter and the five others that I had from Rose! I scarcely dare to give their sense from memory, lest they should lose too much thereby. For where the principal charm of a composition lies in the sex expressed, the memory alone of him to whom it is addressed cannot recapture it: despite himself his imagination will give it a masculine flavour and change its character: his memory must represent it faithfully, word by word, for a synonym might spoil everything. . . . Let us try to remember, however, what I read and re-read so many times before the end of 1759.

> *"In truth, Anneaugustin, I owe you a reply, despite propriety and reticence and all the virtues; for ingratitude is the worst of vices. What virtue is there that it does not negative? Modesty and propriety, even chastity, I think. . . . Do, not, however, draw far-reaching conclusions from that! You have seen from the few words I have written to you, in the style and manner of the convent, wherein every childish trick is used to give an appearance of concealment, while hiding nothing, that I set a high price upon your heart! Nothing is more true: I would give everything . . . even to all that is meant by happiness to be*

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*The Countess Fanny de Beauharnais (1738-1813) held what may be considered the last of the famous literary Salons of the eighteenth century. She was a good friend to Restif towards the end of his life, and appears also to have furnished him with ideas which he worked up; her own writings are insignificant. Madame Riccoboni (1714-1792), who began life on the stage and had been the wife of an actor, was a novelist of much talent, whose stories were popular in her own time but have not appealed to later generations. [Ed.]

sure of it. And this means that I would rather experience misfortune with you, provided it were not through you, than share good fortune with another. I do not know if you feel the same about me; but it is in that, and in no other imaginable thing, that supreme happiness lies. My dear Anneaugustin (I avenge these two baptismal names you never use), you will find character in me and virtue; and caprice at times, but in appearance only and to rouse up love, never in reality. I know about all your little lapses more or less, and they only make me want the more to capture you. That day when we played battledore and shuttlecock, I clearly saw that you found me as beautiful as the fair Annette (and that is not a little!), and so kind a judgment earned my heart, already much inclined towards you, as you may have gathered during our conversation last Autumn at Mme Chouin's. So disposed, I could be happy with you and you with me. I have plans, resources, influential relatives and . . . love.

Always yours

Your Rose.

Yesterday Drin, who has approached my parents, murmured, or rather boomed, below my window:

All life's without joy
That in love has no part;
Then leave being coy,
And give me your heart!

Julie, who was with me at the window, answered:

No heart is surrendered
Before it is won,
Nor easily tendered
To stranger-man's son.
My poor little shepherd,
'Tis better I know
With whom I would jeopard
E'er further I go!

I tried to stop her at the fourth line, but she went on. I gave her a good scolding, and said loud enough that there were people one did not trouble to know, let alone get engaged to."

I was so busy with this letter, that I only had time for the following quatrain:

> *Dear Iris, let us love each other with an undying passion! For me, a mighty fire burns ever within me: yes, my more than adorable one, if a like fire burns in you, I have nothing more to wish for, no more to pray for.*

On the Thursday, the 19th of June, Rose took care that I should not be too happy. . . . What art, what admirable craft in woman, thus knowing how to give the importance of "fatality" to the passion she inspires; this relish of destiny and fate! Only on the day after did I give her the very tender verses I had ready:

> *Every day, sweet Iris, my happiness grows. I live only for you, and my heart never wearies of confessing its love. Ah Heaven! You owed your heart to this great love, that precious heart which is all my wealth, my Iris's heart, the heart of my fair mistress, the heart which owns all my tenderness, and compared with which the whole world is nothing to me! You owed it, O Heaven, to the fondest lover that Love ever snared within his net! Command me, my Iris; postpone that happy time when I shall be yours; I shall obey you always. Your pledge is enough for me; and I vow my faith to you. Alas! I would that it rested with me alone to keep it! But what have I said? To doubt is to insult you! When Iris gives her promise she does not break it!*

But Friday, the 20th, was the happiest day in the history of this passion. Rose had told me at midday that she was going for a walk that evening with her sister, Mme Chouin, and Burat's Julie. I saw to it that I met them in the Place Saint-Étienne, and Mme Chouin, for form's sake, invited me to walk with them as far as the river. At the Ile d'Amour they asked me to leave them for a moment, and I waited for them by the Mill. They were away for about a quarter of an hour, and during this time Burat joined me. Then we walked along the Port Saint-Nicolas, skirted the rampart of the Benedictines, passed the Porte de Paris, and continued along the avenue of lime trees which leads from that to the Porte d'Égléný. To enhance the charm of the occasion, Rose gave me a second letter. Mme Chouin, Julie, Burat, and little Thérèse left us to walk alone, running far ahead of us and sitting down. When a little nearer to them, Rose and I did likewise, so that we formed two groups, one of which was more interesting than the other as may be seen from the illustration.* Rose, half-reclining in my arms, said the tenderest things to me: it was she who made love. . . . I was enchanted! The whole universe was forgotten! Hers was the charm of Armide; yet Renaud was no longer Renaud, but an effeminate lover. . . . Every sensation was delicious! None of that excess which leads to remorse; none of the frenzied exaltation which Colette had at times inspired: but a general well-being, a complete and unmixed rapture. No anxiety, no jealousy; Rose was my Muse, set above me by her wit; with her I took the second place; whereas with all my other loves I had retained the first. There was a moment when Rose's breast was almost underneath my mouth, and she made a quick movement which brought it in contact with my lips. She felt my shiver of delight, and murmured:

Look! Can you not see my friends down there?

I controlled myself, and she continued languorously:

We two are alone here; defend yourself if you can.

At this moment some one on the rampart within the town began to sing that air, *La Furstemberg*, the words of which are as well known as the country dance. But Rose had not heard them and listened.

Has my chance for ever fled
To requite the wrong I had
From the shepherd lad

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*See list of projected illustrations at the end of this volume, No. xlviii.

Who robbed me of my maidenhead
In our orchard blossom-clad?
I meant to make it
Harder before I let him take it:
"Colas!" said I.
"After all, fie,
How much will you be the richer by?"
No use! For I, alas,
Was tumbled on the grass,
His purpose such, I could not shake it!
"Wolf! Wolf!" I cried;
"Wolf! Wolf!" I sighed,
When he was satisfied.

Why grumble at me, mother,
If I was really glad
To soothe my shepherd lad?
Why all the fuss and bother?
And why should I be sad?
'Tis true, I must confess,
I knew how to repay his tenderness!
But why scold me,
And guilty hold me,
Without hearing what he told me?
"With this knife in my breast
I'll win my last rest,
Iris, at once, if I may not embrace you! . . .
And 'twill be said,
When I am dead,
For you I bled!"

After that, mother dear,
You would not have had me profess
Myself his murderess?
If I had been severe,
He would have killed himself, no less!

All his passion put to bed
At the price of a maidenhead!
Where's the shame?
Rather than earn such blame,
Would you not have done the same?
No, indeed, I don't repent;
I hold 'twas well done to relent
And yield before his dire predicament.
'Tis our duty, indeed,
By word and deed
To comfort those in need.

Rose said in amazement: "I love these old-time songs" (leaning more closely in my arms) "which give no Jansenist significance to love." As for me, I was in fairyland. I felt no desire; I was happy enough without possession. I took this sentiment for true love, Rose for stupidity or coldness. She had (I could not doubt it later) come out meaning to yield herself, and I defeated all her plans by my respectful fondness; I out-Plato'd Plato! I was so happy listening to her conversation that liberties would have been an interruption, and possession seemed trivial and stupid in comparison. . . . Thereby I lost much of her esteem, and was to notice this every day. . . . I was not in love with her, since I had no desire; Jeannette alone could be loved without desire. What was it then? I was *enslaved*: I was seduced by Rose's wiles, and her wit flattered my vanity; I set her above her sex through her powers of thought, and especially since she had written to me; I regarded her as an angelic being, and denied the thought that had occurred to me on hearing Colombat's tale. Or perhaps I thought her so easy to take that I disdained the opportunity. There was something of all this in my mind. But I never compared Rose with Madame Parangon, far from it! and was most careful not to conceive of or imagine them together;

this at least never happened. Colette would have obliterated Rose; as . . . she did obliterate her in circumstances to be described shortly. . . . Complete solitude was about us and a profound silence had succeeded to the merry song; the deep blue sky and the shining stars were our only witnesses. Sighing, I clasped her waist. "What a lovely evening!" she said. "How still the air is!" "Yes," I answered. "Only Zephyr ventures to caress you!" "Ah, Zephyr!" she answered, yielding herself completely to my arms, "why are you not my lover! But his heart is . . . cold and tranquil as the air . . ." She stopped. . . . Love pricked me sharply! A nosegay of roses in her bosom gave perfume to it, and I bent so low to inhale their sweetness that when Rose started slightly, my burning lips melted its snow a second time. "How sweet and fresh this lawn is!" she said, stretching herself upon it. . . . "Do you know why Nature made it?" "To be crushed under happy lovers." "Ah, so you say! But . . . it was not meant for that!" "Forgive, sweet Rose, if I have ventured on an allusion that might shock your modesty." "No, you have not shocked me. . . . A beloved lover can never shock." "How happy I am with you, my Rose! . . . For happiness is the fulfilment of desire." "And have you no desire?" "None, save to eternalise the present." "What you feel is flattering to me; it is a fine compliment! But is it genuine? For" (under her breath) . . . "*you do not sin through ignorance!*" "Ah, can you doubt it?" "It is a fantasy of your imagination . . . which is in no way real; for . . . *you do not un . . . derstand.*" "What! Do you think that I would pay you . . . a compliment that I did not mean?" "*You have not understood me. . . . Understand me now!*" I pressed her to my heart: "I adore you, my beautiful Rose! My happiness depends on you!" "You are beginning . . . to understand. . . . I will guarantee to do all that depends on me; if . . . you know how to exact it." "Exact! It is not for me to do that." "It is what I want. . . . The night is very dark! We cannot see ten paces. . . . Let us talk low." I murmured in her ear, fondling her breasts: firm, elastic, velvety – no one had breasts like Rose, seventeen and a half years old and of a vigorous growth. . . . At this critical moment a girl passed only four paces from us, and began to sing, probably at the request of her escort:

Dear memory . . . .
. . . .
Spring up, green swards.

Pierrefitte thanked the amiable Hortense Buisson (my friend's sister) and asked her for another song, which he mentioned. We dared not move, for fear of being discovered; besides we could hear some one else approaching from the other side: it was M. Delamarre and Mlle Housset the pretty lame daughter of the doctor. They sat down, and the future mistress of the woods and forests, who had a most melodious voice, chose this moment to sing the stanzas that Hortense had been asked for.

I was alone in the grove;
Far and wide my sheep
In the meadows did rove
In my dog's keep;
When Colin overraught me
    And caught me,
    With purpose in his look. . . .
Ah! I feel. . . . The word I may . . .
    Not say. . . .
    My finger he took. . . .
After this the depredator
Of my hand was soon possessed. . . .
I cried out on the traitor,
Who now was kissing my breast. . . .

But he gave my mouth a buss
And stopped it thus.
Ah! I feel. . . . I breathe. . . . Ah, nay,
I cannot say. . . .
Let be the rest!

After these two stanzas had been delightfully rendered, some blackguards, such as are everywhere to be found, brought Pan and Priapus on the scene, putting the Graces to flight (but Rose remained), and a discordant voice struck up:

It is our chambermaid,
You're not listening, I'm afraid!
She is all split up now,
You're not listening, I vow!
You're not listening, I vow!
Right from her secret glade,
You're not listening, I'm afraid,
To the hollow of her. . . . Now
You're not listening, I vow! etc.

Another like it followed, and another, to the number of fifteen within a quarter of an hour: that is until all the bawdy songs that were current in the town and neighbourhood had been exhausted. I will only quote the first lines:

Holy father, I confess, etc.

Pluck my fig, but wear a glove, etc.

Ah! How my pizzle tortures me! etc.

Beauty's star is in your eye,
Fair Helen, 'tis the truth I say:
Lend me your p-u-s-s-y
To eat my s-t-i-c-k!

Pussy sat and combed her hair
On a stool, I do declare, etc.

Pussy with a hermit's beard, etc.

My little Fanchon, your beauty dazzles me, etc.
(5 couplets.)

Long, long and very long
The elements. . . .

Since death at last must end the measure,
(Here Adam says to Eve)
Let's die in an excess of pleasure! . . .

Hide this bearded puss!
Away! It's no good to us.

One came groping in the night
And caught you, though there was no light, etc.

To war, my friends, we're off to war!
But in no dangers will we mix!
A girl stretched out upon the floor
Is target for our ballistics!

At a ball the other day
It so fell I was the viewer
Of a place out of the common way,
Turelure!
Drolly built, I you assure,
Robin, turelure lure!

It was neither round nor square,
Of its colour 'twas obscure:

One side of it was like, I swear,
Turelure!
A big peach far too ripe, I'm sure,
Robin, turelure, lure!

Yes, your dark one is pretty,
And dimpled, and witty.
You'll wed? None in the city
In vain sought her pity!
You'll be welcomed, whatever visit you pay:
"Come in, my fine cuckold!" they will say.

Away with the Graces Nine of Pindus Mount, etc.
(Ode to Priapus.)

Be ever fair,
Sylvia, be e'er
Under the wing of Love. . . .
And I'll love, love, love you long enough.

"That is the least indecent of the lot," said Rose, who had been listening attentively. Either they heard her or guessed at her presence, for one of them sang:

Sweet Éléonore, do you know? etc.

Then:

A heart in love untaught
Is aye a strong defender,
But once force it to surrender,
No heart is then so tender.
Sweet is it to have caught
A heart in love untaught.

"Ah, you have loved before!" said Rose. "Your heart is not fresh like mine!" "All the same, I have never loved as I love you." (And this answer would have been a biting commentary had I known of her adventure with Brother Boulanger.) We were each trying to deceive the other. . . . "Time has slipped away," continued Rose, "and in a moment we must part." "I dread that cruel moment!" "Then use it well, so as not to regret it." "Ah, Rose, the time I pass with you is . . . so happy that I must regret it all my life!" "I know some one with whom, it is said, he would be even happier!" I made no movement, but kept my lips glued to her hand. . . . She got up impatiently, and her tone was a trifle acid, as she asked me whether I had been very fond of Madelon, and how I had shown it? I was careful not to mention the sixfold ecstasy during the Cordeliers Vespers; I platonised my love. "That is not what I have been told," she answered, "because after all . . . one knows. . . . But I see they slandered you," she added, laughing bitterly, "and that it was some one else who . . ." "Some one else!" I exclaimed in pique. "Do not think that of Mademoiselle Madelon! It was I who . . . and I repaired. . . ." "Ah, how was that?" Then, fearing that she might have a false idea of Madelon, I confessed to my six raptures on the 20th of January. "Ah, how you loved her!" exclaimed Rose. "And doubtless you have never loved anyone but her!" "I love you better." "I dò not believe it, I will never believe it!" "If you doubt it. . . ." "Well?" "You would be unjust. . . ." "If you love me as much as you say, you are very . . . undemonstrative." I began to have a serious suspicion that I had behaved like a nincompoop in Rose's opinion. I wanted to retrieve my mistake, and might have succeeded, had not Julie and Thérèse rejoined us, despite Mme Chouin and Burat: "Do you know that it is ten o'clock, Sister!" said the little girl. "We shall get scolded!" Rose said to me aloud: "Were you at school when a boy?" "Yes, Mademoiselle." "Did you learn to read easily?" "Yes, easily enough." "Then you are not thick-headed?" "No, at least from what I have been told." "How people change! . . . You must leave us at the Jeu de Paume, for no one must suspect that we have been together; not everyone would believe that our walk was as . . . *innocent* as it has been."

On the way home Burat sang a song which he believed suitable to my position, so that there was no need for Rose to talk to me:

Love did ne'er interest me
In virginhood sealed;
But Colin so pressed me
And forced me to yield.
He takes my hand:
I don't understand!
I am all in a flurry and pother!
I try to hide and run away:
But he follows me, follows me alway!
What can I do to stop him, say?
There was none to help me, mother!
There was none to help me, mother!

When we make Love the King
Our hearts do homage to, what bliss,
What freedom all our service is;
Fair night on fair day following,
What endless pleasures do they bring!
Say, my Silvia, are you not
Ravished by our heavenly lot?
Shall we, from all pledges free,
Taste the sweetest sweets there be?
Into my arms you have sunk;
And in yours, my love, I'm drunk
With the loving rapture-filled
Drug that's from your eyes distilled!

Come then, ah, and have no fear
All your longings to deliver:
For be sure our hearts will never
Be to each other ought but dear
Giving us this same loving cheer!
On the alabaster of your breast
Reverently my hand I rest,
That all satin doth eclipse;
And, following my hand, my lips:
For 'tis Love's command that mine
Should so glue themselves to thine,
To drink the unfathomable cup
Of pleasures never to be drained up.

"Sing us something that is not rubbish," said Rose, and he sang:

Never my rapture dies,
Ever my forces rise,
I erect . . . altars to your fair eyes
Under these skies!
Fanchon, kiss me. . . .
I swear . . . for ever. . . .
Yes, for ever I'll love you! . . .
But now you're colder grown!
The altar is overthrown!
I am not pleased with that, I own! . . .
Kiss me . . . Fanchon,
God! what sighs! What ecstasies.
I know . . . no sweeter violence.
Ah, mother dear! . . . Colin, kiss me. . . .

"Nothing but double meanings!" said Rose.

For your musette you ask me, dear,
To make you new songs every day;
Yet will not have Love interfere

With my song in any way!
Ah, Iris, you must cease to wake
Love, if Love a mute you'ld make!
Even if my lips were sealed
To all my tortured ecstasies,
Yet my love must be revealed
To you each moment in my eyes!
Ah, Iris, etc.

"Not so bad," said Rose, as we reached the *Place des Fontaines* where we had to separate. I gave her my verses, though they scarcely fitted a situation I could not have foreseen. They were entitled *Élégie.*

ELEGY

Alas, dear Iris! When a lover is really captive, he never feels it more than by a little separation! So I felt, yesterday, when far away from here. Ah, Heaven! removed from you, I no longer live! At dawn I offered up a thousand prayers that day might humour my impatience and speed more quickly on their way the golden horses of the lazy Sun. When evening came at last, afire with longings, I flew impetuously to the site of all my pleasures. Great God! How much I meant to say to you! What tender vows were brimming in my heart! It was yearning, longing, adoring, sighing! . . . Picture its ardour to yourself, fair Iris! As I came near you, my pulses throbbed, and a gentle languor, born of emotion, distilled sweet tenderness through every sense: "Ah, how I love you! You are too adorable," I said to myself. "My heart will ever love you! I want to burn with an undying flame for you, and to make you the sole happiness of my life! Ah, sweet Love, I worship her! Venus herself is not so fair!" So spake my heart. But you had gone away, Iris, and, missing you, what terrors seized me! Nothing could comfort me; heart and mind were troubled despite myself, and sweet tears, formed of Love, came to my eyes; but I remembered your commands, Iris, and drove them back. . . . At last you returned; ah, what joy! My soul, my every sense, my very heart were drowned in it. I looked upon fair Iris, and the rapture of seeing her restored my life, my hope. O Love, fond Love, you are my only inspiration; but it was Iris who lighted

> *the fire that I exhale! I have drunk to-day more of love from her eyes than the fair Day-star sheds of heat.*

The most detailed and searching analysis could not give so just an idea of the inconceivable state of my emotions as do these bad verses. But to return.

At first I felt ashamed of the lack of enterprise I had displayed during my long *duo* with Rose. . . . But after a moment's reflection I congratulated myself: "You cur!" I said to myself, "remember that you belong to the amiable Fanchette, and that Rose is, and must be, no more than a distraction. . . ." This was my frame of mind when I got home and it was in no way changed by the letter Rose had given me before our walk. I will try to remember it:

> *Every evening, Anneaugustin, I receive prose and verse from you. The verse is nothing wonderful, but its very faults are flattering to her whom you address, for they seem to spring from the disorder of your heart, and mount thence to perturb the brain. In your prose there is nothing to criticise; you have the art of saying the same thing day by day, without becoming wearisome. Truly it is of all things the thing you find easiest to express, and the most agreeable for a woman to receive from the pen of a dear lover. And, when you read this letter, I shall have completely proved to you that you have found a way to make yourself loved, and that your captive, knowing no defence against your arms, makes your happiness her sole concern. My appointment with you is one proof; but what happens during the evening will be a stronger one. Ah, dear lover, it would be imprudent to say more for . . . I know not. . . . But enough of the tongue of mortals; I, in my turn, will use the language of the Gods. I have neither your facility nor practice, but I have an overflowing heart, which must vent itself in rambling fashion, as I cannot let it speak as it would like:*
>
> *Love, they say, adopts all disguises in order, alas, to bring us under his dominion! If you love reading, he is the novel and spreads his nets on every*

page; if singing, the traitor turns to a lyre; if hunting, he is the forest shadow. . . . And when he has you fast, he laughs at the sly tricks with which he has lured you. Let us see how he worked to seduce a Beauty who merits our compassion! I must tune my lyre to pity: may my notes, though watered with my tears, rouse sympathy without inspiring horror! If often sorrow lacks grace, we must blame him who mixes the colours; for in painting what is shameful one should hide the cypress under flowers. In this town, where Love and his mother have always held their court, where empty chatter is the rule, and wit the mark of fools, and morality a vulgar prejudice: in short, in Auxerre, lived gentle Agnès, there called Iris. Such was the power of her charms that to see her was to be her captive; the heart was taken even before the eyes, and both laid down their arms; with every step, desires blossomed under her feet, attesting her beauties' power. Large proud black eyes; a modest flush upon her cheeks which shone with virtue's pure radiance, the bosom of a Hebe, a supple body and a noble carriage; the image of a Virgin taught by Vesta *as pictured in the* Wallon *room. I might have drawn her yet more beautiful, but the portrait would not have been so faithful. Those who are discontented with this sample can ransack Athenian annals or pick from a Roman Beauty's charms enough to deck my heroine with Helen's loveliness; and, to complete this masterpiece, Greek and Circassian alike could be invited, as a signal honour, to try their brush. But I, who know that perfect Beauty is a rare and precious bird sought and still sought for since time began, leave fools to paint what does not exist; my compass is limited by truth. But I admit, this Iris was attractive, that it was no common passion she inspired, and that she had charms beyond all other women. Did she trade on them? No; her only fault was to be too good. In vain Love sought to bring her to submission; this shy heart – it was pitiful – armed itself at the first word of simple homage! . . . When has young Beauty blushed at words of love? She blushed, but you know why. You will have been taught that the flush on Beauty's brow is not so much a sign of modesty as of a strong disinclination to continue cruel, the herald of her heart's surrender. But, just God! the scarlet which dyed our Iris's face was born of terror lest her heart be taken! . . . Such being our Beauty, you conclude that no lover crossed her threshold? Yet her heart has just been captured by a lover concealing his imposture (all Nature mourns for it!). My soul knows its misfortune, and the deceiver's name is Anneaugustin.*

These lines are better than mine, but they are frequently strained and the sixth does not scan.

Rose seemed cold to me on Saturday the 21st, but I was very tender, for her letter of the day before had enchanted me. And in this connection I have noticed that a mistress's first letter is a favour which surpasses all others; it is for her to grant it at the right moment. When a lover receives this confirmation of his good fortune, he is thrown into a rapture of joy which is continuously prolonged and renewed: it is happiness itself by its very continuity. Each subsequent letter reanimates this first emotion, and, when he has read the last one, he re-reads all the others; these sacred evidences of his beloved's affection corroborate each other, and together form a proof which reassures his heart and satisfies its thirst with an ever present consolation. . . . Write, then, fond mistresses; but see to it that your lover is worthy! He does not deserve one letter from you, unless the most trivial word traced by your hand puts him beside himself; unless he lays it upon his mouth and upon his heart; unless he sets it up as an idol to adore. . . . It was this that gave me the idea for my *Nouvel Abeillard*, the best of all my books after the *Vie de mon Père*. . . . Here are the day's verses:

> *What, charming Iris, I have made you sad! What, I could give way to such weakness before you? Alas! dear heart, do not be troubled, but reflect that my suffering was born of tenderness. I have said a thousand times that you alone are my life: I sigh as I await the happiness of seeing you when the Day-star has brought evening in its course; how then can I be glad when Iris is ravished from me? My adorable Iris, who charms me, whom I love (I call Love to witness) more than I love my very soul! Consider then, my dear one, that it is a bad day for lovers when they cannot meet. Grant me then, my divine mistress, the chance of speaking each day of the fire that drives me; of consecrating one little moment to a description of my amorous torments.*

I was depressed on the 22nd and 23rd. In my note-books I ask the reason for this. There was more than one! On the 22nd I had had an interview with Edmée which made me deplore her loss. I will not describe it; it was just another of my thousand and one inconsistencies at this time.* Then I met Marianne Tangis with her sister and friends, and Marianne was holding a young man's arm, and . . . I was jealous. . . . How much right I had to be so! My verses for the 22nd were a sort of *rondeau*:

> *A thousand times each day my love-consumed heart protests to my fair Iris the passion whose sweet charm constrains it. Her beauties fill me with ardour and gently compel me to love her and to follow her where she goes: the God of love himself baits the hook for my fair Iris. Alas! How happy is my lot! The idol that my heart adores deigns to answer my every prayer! Yes, I vow a surpassing passion to my fair Iris.*

At dinner-time, on the 23rd, I came upon handsome Caulette (passenger-boat inspector, and brother of that Mlle Caulette who was for so long in the local post office) almost at Mme Parangon's knees. He seemed to be addressing her most ardently, and tried to kiss her hand; but she withdrew it, blushing. "Is he making love to her?" I wondered. I made my appearance, and she immediately offered me the hand which she had just with-drawn so quickly, saying: "Come, I have been waiting for you; I want you to write a letter to my father at my dictation." Caulette was obliged to leave us. "You must write, because I have said you would," she continued. "A lie is wrong, even if told to rid oneself of importunity, and must be made good if possible." So I wrote just what she dictated to her father, and then a letter to him from myself. This interview, and the scene which had preceded it, cast a shadow over me. My imagination shrank especially from the thought that Caulette had held and almost kissed her hand! . . . Nor was this a passing impression: it cut deep and lasted a long time, and inspired two long poems, the one entitled *Elegy for Colette*, and the other: *In meam Infidelem hæc Saxiaci nunc scribo.* The Elegy is sheer delirium from one end to the other; I address Madame Parangon as though she were Rose. The second was not finished until November, when I was in Paris. Both appear in the *Drame de la Vie*. . . . Then I reflected how far my strayings this way and that were taking me from Mlle Fanchette. And finally Rose had been cold to me since our walk together. Edmée, Marianne, Colette, Fanchette, Rose, I suffered jealousy through all of them; and past, present or future were subject for regret, remorse, anxiety and disturbance. When I had left Mme Parangon, I exclaimed involuntarily: "How unhappy I am! . . ." and a moment later was asking myself: "Why? . . ." Then I realised it was because some one had taken Colette's hand; because Marianne leant on a young man's arm; because Edmée was going to marry another in a week; because I was afraid some one would steal away the heart and person of Fanchette; and because Rose was cold. . . . But such thoughts are quickly banished at twenty. . . . I went to buy a nosegay for Rose, and conveyed it adroitly to my *Jeanne-Baptistette* (her other name). She was talking to her neighbour the milliner, Mme Durand, an amiable young woman, and I addressed the latter, only greeting Rose with a respectful bow. "Madame," I said, "I have brought these flowers to Mme Chouin to be used – she will know how, but she is not in; so may I venture to ask you to keep them till her return? For I could not ask this favour of Mlle Rose." "Why not?" answered the milliner. "She is a friend of Madame Chouin." On this I gave the flowers to Rose in a manner that would have proved they were for her, had she not guessed it already. She went at once to Mme Chouin, who was at home, but had stayed indoors at my entreaty. When Rose came out again, she commended my ingenuity with an imperceptible gesture. As far as her parents were concerned the flowers were a gift from Adélaide Poulet (Mme Chouin), so everyone was pleased. Verses for the 23rd:

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*I have changed my mind, while printing, and will give a word or two of this conversation. "You and my sister . . . have caused me much sorrow!" "But how, little cousin?" "Catherine has told me the whole story; and when I understood how everything had come about, I realised I had just been used to fit in with your arrangements." "But I am sure that you will come to love Bertrand, and I should never have forgiven myself if I had failed such a pretty girl as you, and one who did me the honour to love me. Ah, if Fanchette C . . . were to be taken from me, how bitterly I should regret not being Edmée Servigné's husband!" "What's all this," said Catherine, coming up to us. "You know perfectly well that no one is going to take her away – who could, when you have her sister on your side?" "I agree with you; no one can take her away: that is what gave me strength to obey my parents, and give to my cousin a treasure which I cannot help regretting!" "There, there, you have not given her up altogether; she knows what is due to you. . . . But understand, I only say this to myself and to you. . . ."

> *Iris, cruel Iris, accept these few flowers, and let me be forgiven! . . . O four times fairer and more hard than a diamond cut by* Chéron, *look, still unmoved, upon the dark picture of my torments! Whenever my wounded heart takes courage to paint for you the horrors of its martyrdom, at once you find that ill, which more than one loves to hear said. Esteem the worth of sentiment more highly! Will you be beautiful in vain, and never put me to the proof by entering this soul which lies open to your eyes? . . . I talk ill of stuffs and broideries, chatter of fops, sly gallantries; I have no skill to exercise my wit upon a tassel; but, artless and direct, my mind leaves my heart master of my words. I love for myself and for my heart's adoration, and my soul is ruled by a constancy which (unlike these flowers) time shall never wither nor satiety of pleasure; just as your charms will never age.*

Rose refused to let me accompany her to the shooting on St. John's Day, the 24th. At first I was hurt; but on reflection I saw that her refusal was all to the good, as it prevented me from appearing in public as her escort. But even if I had been really hurt, I should have been more than recompensed that evening! For Rose had noticed the effect of her harshness, and made reparation by a letter adroitly slipped into my hand, by tenderest assurances and by that air of languorous yielding which is so adorable in a mistress when it is sincere. The ease with which she could always entertain me whenever it was necessary has since convinced me that Rose was working with her mother to the same end; and that both prudent mother and wily daughter (warm hearted too, perhaps, for the one does not exclude the other) wanted to force me into a solid and lasting attachment, and so endear Rose to me that I would forget her want of beauty. It was all well planned and, I repeat, they would certainly have succeeded but for the insurmountable obstacles which, as you know, Reader, my position opposed to them. Even so, Rose was so clever that she might have overcome these had she known more. I heard afterwards that she said: "Ah, if I could have guessed, I would have bound him with all the ties of love and honour and pleasure! . . . But I followed the ordinary methods dictated by prudence, especially when I thought he loved me more tenderly with his heart than with his senses." It should be mentioned that Rose had been deflowered by Brother Boulanger at seventeen. Her mother had discovered this, and in her affliction and distress had wanted to send her daughter back to the convent; but Rose had turned her from her purpose with two promises: firstly, never to see the seductive Brother Boulanger again, and secondly, to secure a husband, who would both respect and adore her, if her mother would help. . . . I verified the second promise for myself. . . . So Mme Lambelin seconded her daughter, but with the propriety that was natural to her; in this her tact was admirable. . . . However, as I was saying, Rose offered double reparation for her harshness. When I confessed that I was sad, she answered: "And I too." "But what reason have you to be sad?" "What is yours, Monsieur?" "I can only have one. I cannot talk to you as much as I would like." "And I have only one," repeated Rose. "I cannot see or talk to you as often as I would like. . . . To refuse you as I did hurt me more than you. . . . But would you have me risk being seen with you in broad daylight and before the assembled townsfolk, without . . . my mother's permission? You know how it is in little towns such as ours. Everything gets abroad, is repeated and distorted. . . . I did it as much for your sake as for my own; I did not think it the moment to publish our friendship. . . . My parents do not intend to marry me for two years. My father has noticed your attentions, and spoken to me seriously about the matter. If you could not wait for me, people would think I had refused you, and I do not want them to get this idea, because you are above being refused, and because it could never happen. . . . Your interests are as dear to me as my own, perhaps even more so. . . . One is not worthy to love, if one only loves oneself. . . . May the day come when you are as happy and as honoured as I desire, even if I am not there to see it!" I had to admit that her reasons were excellent, and, touched to the heart by her noble sentiments, I thanked my generous friend. On leaving her, I gave her these verses:

> *To paint my heart's trouble, Iris, I should need words of Love's shaping; for who but this God could express the passion I feel, alas, and the tender fire which burns and oppresses me? Alas, he makes us feel! Alas, he makes us love! He alone can dictate the fond avowal of this loving heart's surpassing passion for you. Yes, lovely Iris, this fire grows so fierce that every moment that I sigh for you in vain causes your fond lover so much anguish that he is like to die of his black grief! Will you not, then, pour balm upon his hurts, too charming girl? For, alas, it is for you he suffers them! Help him, fair Iris, drive away his fears, and free his loving heart from its sad durance.*

They are feeble and manifest the dejection of my heart. Then I hastened away to read my letter, the third I had received.

Why should I torment my heart's beloved, when it is only to torment myself? . . . I do not know what conception I have formed of him, but if he knew it and could read it in my heart, he would be satisfied. Anneaugustin makes me regret that he is not the only man I have ever looked upon! . . . Yes, I regret that others have impressed themselves upon my eyes, have had some sort of contact with me, although they have never reached my heart! . . . And I have been forced to deprive myself of all I desire, of all I wish to see, to look upon all that hurts and wearies me! Oh, I had a most amusing time! Julie and Dorothée, who were with me, asked me twenty times: "What is the matter? Are you ill?" "Ah yes, ill, very ill," I thought to myself. Jeannette Demailly came up to us. I love that girl. She whispered to me of nothing but you. Julie noticed that I was all flushed and happy. "Your colour has come back, Rose. Are you feeling better?" she asked. "Yes," I answered, pointing to Jeannette, "she has given me sweet balsam to smell." But enough of that. I have tried to rhyme the beginning of our loves together, touching fact with fancy. Here is my attempt:

Anneaugustin, I may certainly confess that I have had friends. . . . How often words are treacherous! For, after all, though it is usual to have friends, this sacred word is also a deceiving mask used to serve private ends. So many Beauties fear to be frank! They dare not say, alas! "My heart is yours! . . ." Instead they say: "BE THE RECIPIENT OF MY SECRETS! . . . LET SINCERE FRIENDSHIP BE THE BOND WHICH CHARMS OUR SOULS! . . ." *But friendship deserves some payment, and the price is generally love. Yet these friends of your Iris received no such tender wage. . . . Friends, do I say? Alas, there is but one! One dear and loyal friend pays court to me, and I, too cruel, often rebuke him for some light word he ventures on, a thought too tenderly, to calm his torment, his ardour over-passing the constraints of friendship. In fond hope, Anneaugustin (for that is my lover's name) has said no word, for a whole month, of his hidden flame, putting his trust in Time and Love. Vain hope! One day . . . one fatal day! . . . weary of hiding his soul's rapture, he declared his passion to his Iris. Say, Muse, how this Vestal heaped reproaches on him, picture the terrible state of the lover. . . . Tarquin ran a less appalling risk when he ravished from Lucrece that flower, the fleeting spark of virtue, which her dull brute of a husband had left to be reaped by the lover who out-stripped him. . . . A lesser blow would strike a young actress, the darling*

> *of some rich voluptuous old baron who, too soon discovering her wantonness, sends her back to the wings, to make a much worse bargain. . . . Austin groaned, his fruitful eyes shed tears in floods upon the floor; thirty nuns would spend less tears over the grave of one of their superiors than this Daphnis, whom I sing, poured upon his idol's feet. But, oh wonder, grief and sorrow! Though he kneels to her he cannot melt her. Dry-eyed and austere, Iris beholds her Paladin's amorous sobs, and finds nought to say but:* "LEAVE ME, PRESUMPTUOUS MAN! IF I HAD KNOWN THE OBJECT OF YOUR HOMAGE. . . ." *then flees without another word. It is said that even so the Fair one blushed at what she had said, fearing it was too much. O unavailing gods! Might not so fond a lover as Austin, modelled by the Graces, with justice claim to love you, cruel Iris, and be loved by you? . . . Can you keep your heart closed to him? You will pay dearly for your long coldness! . . .*
>
> *This is what I have done: if you like it, I have succeeded. Farewell, dear martyr to love.**

On the 25th I only saw Rose for a moment and could do no more than slip my letter and these verses into her hand:

> *Fair Iris, when a heart has never loved, never yet been touched by this sweet emotion, it is not, I am sure, captured in a moment: but when it, in its turn, loves, how delicate its fire and its sentiment! Each thought, each longing, each emotion, has but one aim, to please the idol it adores. And if this dear idol returns his passion, a thousand charming transports of which he had not dreamed take eternal possession of his faithful heart. Such, my sweet Iris, is the surpassing love which burns for you in your lover; every sense and all his heart. . . .* (Four lines destroyed here. . .) *I would rather submit to so sweet a service than enjoy the sovereign power of a King.*

On the 26th Rose arranged for me to have a serious conversation with her mother, who told me a great deal about her affairs, speaking of her native place (Irancy), of her family, and of a country property. . . . This

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*It will be asked how I could remember these verses. One of Rose's cousins, an actress at the Italiens, had them printed and I obtained a copy. She only made a few important changes, such as her illustration of the *actress in the wings*, etc., and these I have not tried to revise.

was to force me to do the same, which is more than permissible on a mother's part when she sees a young man paying attentions to her daughter. But I could not delude myself with the mother as I did with the daughter: I felt it was useless to make myself out better than I was. So I told her quite frankly that I was one of fourteen children. She made a gesture of surprise. I assured her that we were all that. "Then, Monsieur, you are all the more obliged to work and make a position for yourself, and to behave like an honest man; as your credit or dishonour will reflect on so many people," she answered. "I assure you, Monsieur Nicolas, that I have always noticed that members of large families prosper on but a small capital; doubtless because for this very reason they are more active and industrious." I said to myself: "If the daughter is clever, the mother has common sense." I had no chance to deliver my verses.

On the 27th I had a second interview with Mme Lambelin. Rose was out and when she came in at nine o'clock, she was sent indoors, and I was left with a double dose of prose and verse.

On the 28th I had a fourth letter from Rose. Mother and daughter arranged between them that harsh treatment should always be followed by marked favours: if Rose kept away from me two or three days, or was aloof and cold in manner, a letter would reward me. And the letter? We shall see. . . . In the meantime I continued to write every day, and when something prevented me from delivering my letters and verses, on the next day or the day after, the dose was double or treble, so that nothing was wasted. It was an unfailing way of winning the affection of a young provincial such as Rose; it would have won the adoration of a convent girl even in Paris. A letter and a poem every day! It is something to read and a sweet occupation; the letter is looked forward to more eagerly than our politicians await the *Courier de l'Europe* and, lately, the *Postillon par Calais.* This letter was the most explicit Rose had ever written to me, and our conversation that evening, before I had had a chance to read it, will give some idea of the contents. "Do you think it would be wiser to marry the person one loves at once, than to look forward to it in a year or two?" she asked. "One would languish to death while waiting!" I answered. "Not with true love and if there were no cause for jealousy." "Even so, the suffering would be too great." "Also I did not say more *agreeable*, but *wiser*. I am for waiting: I am only eighteen, and the judgment is not formed enough at that age. I might make mistakes through heedlessness which would alienate the heart which I have every interest in keeping; I might even lose it for ever. Whereas if I let the impression deepen which binds me to my lover, even by sending him away from me, I strengthen my affection, and prepare myself for all my future duties. . . . That is the problem I wanted to put to you. I did not expect to have the chance of talking to you so freely, and so I said a word about all this in my letter. When you read it, note specially a promise that I make in it." I had no time to answer, as her mother appeared, and as they were working in collusion, Rose went indoors. Mme Lambelin took up her part of a reasonable woman; I had my reasons for not unbosoming myself any more, and she was not as satisfied with me as she had expected. I was in a strange position! Rose attracted me; I found a new and special pleasure in our intercourse; but I was pledged elsewhere and charmed to be so, as I preferred Fanchette to Rose; the only thing that apparently tipped the balance in the latter's favour was that she was on the spot and that which impinges on the senses makes an uncontrollable impression on a healthy man. Also I was in such a hurry to read Rose's letter, that I was a little absent-minded with her mother, and found her sensible remarks (which I should have admired if uttered by Madame Parangon) tedious and of little worth compared to her daughter's letter. . . . As soon as I was released, I broke the seal, and read a charming and well-reasoned letter, in which Rose, after having tactfully announced the absolute necessity of postponing for two years a marriage which I did not contemplate, mitigated this desperate prospect with a promise which I find written out in full, but in Latin, in my Quintus Codex. But here is the letter:

> "*What can I say to my friend upon whose face I see the lines of bitterness and suffering? Dear Anneaugustin, I share your grief. Ah, were it only possible never to leave the beloved! If only one were certain that soon we should be inseparable, but that dear time is far distant, and this distance is the only certain thing. Do you feel this, as I felt it? . . . It made me shudder. Will you shudder, Anneaugustin? Two years. . . . Two years! Ah, what may not happen in two years! . . . In two years I might lose my lover; or he might lose me. I might die; and he would have waited in vain, only to have the charms he so much desires stolen away from him intact. . . . Intact! May I be spared that misfortune! I speak plainly, at the risk of appearing shameless. . . . But what risk is there? Only my lover will read this, and the passion he inspires can never seem to him immodest. . . . Yes, I love you; yes, I desire you! . . . I desire your kisses and caresses; I want you to tumble and destroy and harvest my freshness and my charms. . . . Oh, my lover, I live only for you. What matters the destruction and the harvesting, and death itself, if it is you who have squandered and devoured and killed me? . . . O God, annihilate my being in my lover! Destroy me, and add my soul to his. Alas, why cannot I have his body for my woman's soul, and he have mine to house his man's heart? Thus should we be united without weariness or lassitude! . . . But I wander . . . I rave as in delirium. . . . Forgive, Anneaugustin! Perhaps you are not passionate enough to understand my soul? Ah, how I love you! I die of love. . . . And must I wait two years to possess and be possessed, to be swallowed up and lost in you? . . . Ah, such a lifetime of waiting were too much. . . . One taste, one taste of happiness before! One tear dropped from the balm of life! . . . Then if*

you die, and I die, I shall say as anguish steals away my life: 'He possessed me! . . . Death, I defy you . . . for these charms, this breast were bruised by him. . . .' I am wandering again; my imagination is beyond control. . . . Come, Reason, come to my help! . . . Reason has answered my call, dear friend, and is come back to me. We are both too young for marriage yet; you with your twenty-one years, I scarcely eighteen. Could we sustain the weight of household cares? . . . Have we the means to sustain them? My father thinks that you should leave your profession; but, perhaps, unfortunately, you love it too well . . . to change it for corn chandlery, which is more lucrative than any other business. My father has secured most of this trade; he would teach you the ins and outs of it, and my whole dowry, which amounts to fifteen thousand francs, would be invested in it. For the first three years we would eat at my father's table and live here on the second floor. Does this plan appeal to you? It seems to me most advantageous. You would be my father's pupil, and we would put aside the first year's profit, which would be inappreciable. And anything that you might receive from your parents would be added to this fund. So much for the business side. . . . As for myself personally, I might well be more agreeable to you as a girl at home, with my parents friendly to you and in the comfort we should enjoy when life's struggle is hardest; for poverty and toil lengthen the face and make young women ugly during pregnancy, thus throwing the stagnant water of disgust upon desire. I have this from my mother. . . . Farewell until this evening, Anneaugustin. I shall try to speak to you; but if I am unable, this letter will take the place of conversation. I end with this: I PROMISE SOLEMNLY TO BELONG TO NONE BUT YOU, GRANTING THAT YOU FAITHFULLY PRESERVE WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE: THAT IS TO SAY, THE EXCELLENT NATURE YOU HAVE SHOWN ME. BUT WE CANNOT BE UNITED FOR TWO YEARS AT EARLIEST."

What like of girl was this, who could write such a letter? The veritable Héloïse: not Cailleau's Héloïse, nor Colardeau's, nor even Rousseau's. . . .

In the evening Rose amplified her promise considerably: "Count on my constancy as I count on yours; I swear never to converse, even on indifferent matters with any man whatever; never to cause you pain by unjustifiable caprice; I am incapable of it; to love you equally, absent or present, and to prove to the whole town that a girl who loves you is so absorbed in you that you take the place of all those amusements common to her age. . . . But I must warn you that we shall have to wait two years – at most. This is the opinion of my parents, and you would not have the girl you love oppose them, even if she could do so effectively. Your Rose belongs to you; consider her already bound; for, were it to her misfortune (which she does not expect) she would still give herself. This is the vow of my heart, and it will never be broken. . . ." Rose counted a great deal on her letter, and this would not perhaps have failed of its effect if I had been free; for it touched me. However, I did not mention my cousins' marriage to Rose, nor my parents' visit, as I could not have introduced them to hers. The reason is obvious. It was not Rose's deformity: that had disappeared for me; I loved her with her nascent imperfection; I was not ashamed of it, and only shrugged my shoulders when she was pitied for it; in my opinion Rose needed neither attractions nor even virtue to be worth the seeking. Were you then madly in love with her brain, I am asked. I have always detested it in women: I loved Rose.

On the 29th I only had a moment alone with Rose, and she hastened to take advantage of it to ask what I thought of her letter. "Here is my answer," I said, giving her my prose and verse. In my letter I made somewhat the same undertakings as she had done. Forced to duplicity, I expressed myself in a manner which left me some sort of a loophole; but I agree that, but for Rose's subsequent behaviour, I should have been really guilty towards her. . . . But let us hurry on to the climax, for this short adventure is entered in my note-books in detail enough to fill a volume; for, at the time when it occurred, I gave to it the same importance as to my adventure with Madelon Baron. The object present to the senses has always made an impression on me proportional to the irritability of my organs. I caught a glimpse of Rose at midday, but did not recognise her until she had passed. I wrote these verses:

> *My eyes had been blessed with an entrancing vision, but barely caught sight of from a distance; and to discover who she was my troubled mind invoked the help of the littlest of gods. The divine child sidled up to me, and said: "What is your sorrow, then? What may Love do to help you?" "Alas!" I answered. "I have just seen a vision, a miracle, more beautiful than day. Tell me, divine Child, who is this unknown Beauty?" "Who is that charming vision?" answered Love with a gentle smile. "Do you not know her! It is the charming Iris!" It was you, my dear one; already nearly passed. . . .**

In my notes I call the 30th of June THE HAPPIEST DAY OF MY LIFE, because I had the tenderest interview with Rose, which was not interrupted by her mother. Rose held my hand, and kept it on her person, sometimes upon her heart, sometimes . . . I have never come across anything like it. On the 1st of July I could not sit beside Rose. Her little sister sat between us and, having noticed our little intimacies of the previous evening, tried to imitate and even go beyond them. This would have been most amusing to any other than myself, as she was a pretty child of ten, but instead it only depressed me. . . . It rained on the 2nd, and I had to stand outside, with all the family indoors or leaning over the half-door. Rose could not say a word to me. Here are the mutilated verses for these days:

> *How happy I am when with my lovely Iris! I am enraptured by so fair a fate, and the fire of her love brings instant balm when her arrows wound me. . . . Men and gods may envy me my fortune!*
>
> 1st July: *Fly, pleasures, fly to the girl I adore; that she may see you bloom according to her desire; but carry above all my tender sighs.*
>
> 2nd July: *Trouble, pain and sadness, keep far from here! With one shaft*

---

*29 June: the end is torn out.

> *from her bright eyes my adored one banishes you for ever; and in your place, expelling your coldness, all the Loves shall reign.*
>
> The same day: *I languish and sigh and my eyes melt in tears: dear Iris, I am dying in the greatest of all sorrows. Ah, girl so dear to your fond lover, he will pine to death! Put an end to his misery!*

Thursday the 3rd was even more unlucky. It amused Rose to verify my superstition, though it was only feigned, or if it was real, touched but the surface of my mind. She took care that I should only catch a glimpse of her as she passed by quickly, and assumed a very sad expression. I was nettled, as I thought she was trifling with me, and expressed my feelings in this exclamation: "*What artifice!*" . . . But I soon repented of my words. I wrote these lines the same evening and managed to deliver them.

> *Adorable Iris, what did I see in your eyes just now as you passed? A look of sadness had chased the smiles from your face; and my heart searched for the arrow whose poison wounds it. My eyes fixed upon you sought to read my fate; and my soul sped to draw life from you, that life which Absence, with a malicious shaft, had so nearly ravished from your lover's heart. But when I saw your sad and drooping eyes, sorrow at once took hold of all my senses . . . . I was wrong! Dear Iris, accept my excuse; I am simple and open; I reveal the truth.*

Friday the 4th, on the contrary, was a very happy day. Rose granted me a new favour and we conversed indoors for the first time. Also one of my friends (Burat or Gaudet), to whom I had said: "I wish some one would cry 'Fire!' to-night, to make a certain person come out of the house," was mad enough to give effect to my suggestion, and the result was beyond my hopes. Rose and I went out on the alarm, and her parents, seeing Annette pass with Colombat, permitted the four of us to go and find out what was happening, on condition that we took no risks and returned quickly to relieve their anxiety. In the meantime, they, as proprietors, went up to the loft to keep watch against accidents. We were taken a long way! The jesters had a fine time in a city with no police; they ran in front of the frightened crowd, spreading terror everywhere. The townsfolk rushed about the streets, and were not reassured until every quarter had been visited. I was not in the conspiracy (for other rascals had joined the first), and followed in good faith with the others. Colombat was as delighted as a child, for the incident won him an outing with his Annette, and a most agreeable one, as fear made her fonder. Rose was ravishing: her many comments on the calamity she thought had occurred were sensible and interesting and showed sympathy and generosity.

I told her how my paternal grandfather had been ruined by a fire. A large quantity of hemp had been scutched during the evening and the boons had all been left with my good grandfather, who loved to gather the young people about him in the evening for his daughters' sake and still more for my mother's. They were piled close to the fireplace and reached nearly to the ceiling. Soon after everyone was asleep, a small piece of coal left near them set all alight. In a moment the house was in flames; my mother and aunt made their escape naked; my grandfather attempted to save his money and title deeds and was nearly suffocated. . . . Obliged to take flight, he strayed about the streets looking for his daughters, whom he found at last wandering naked as himself. No one else had any thought but to save themselves, and they were left without help until all danger was over, when they were picked up almost dead. Rose and Annette shed tears over my story. "If I were in such a case," said the latter to Colombat, "what would you do?" "Love you one degree more, if that were possible," he answered. "I believe you would," said Rose. "I shall not ask the same question; but I am sure that he whose hand I hold, would only think himself more lucky?" "Were I on the point of inconstancy," I answered, "such a misfortune would make me for ever faithful." Annette maintained that we were the only men in the world who could feel like this, but Rose cried out: "Every lover would feel the same, and we have lovers. The rest have only men!" At last we went home to calm the old people's anxiety, but not until we were certain that the rumour which had aroused their fears was false; as we walked quickly, we were the first to set anxiety at rest in the quarter. . . . I suspected that Gaudet or Burat had given the alarm, and was not mistaken. The former confessed to it some days later, having pledged me to keep his secret absolutely and, as he had meant well by me, I was doubly bound to silence. Verses:

> *What raptures! O Great Gods, if you are jealous of so rare a happiness, let not her who enchants me feel the fatal strokes of your wrath! My Iris is too fair, too moving, and your anger would be appeased too soon. Instead of Iris, strike the heart which has learned to love her!*

On the 5th of July I had some difficulty in giving my letter and verse to Rose, owing to the presence of her parents, and she noticed this. She had taken off her slippers while talking, and hit me lightly over the hand with them. I took steps not to be caught again, and when I returned her slipper I dexterously included my homage for the day. Here are the verses I wrote that evening:

> *At last, then, I have known the ineffable happiness of seeing and speaking with my dear Iris! May my fond love endure for ever, and leave no wish or longing in my heart!*

Next day, the 6th, Rose caught sight of me at Vespers and made me a little friendly gesture. In the evening she reproached me in private for not being sufficiently devout. There is no form of reprimand more agreeable from a mistress's lips. She speaks with an enchanting gentleness and affection; and the authority she apparently assumes has something of maternal tenderness about it which, joined to love, composes a delicious sentiment. Besides, such reprimands always seem to invite a greater fondness. Verses:

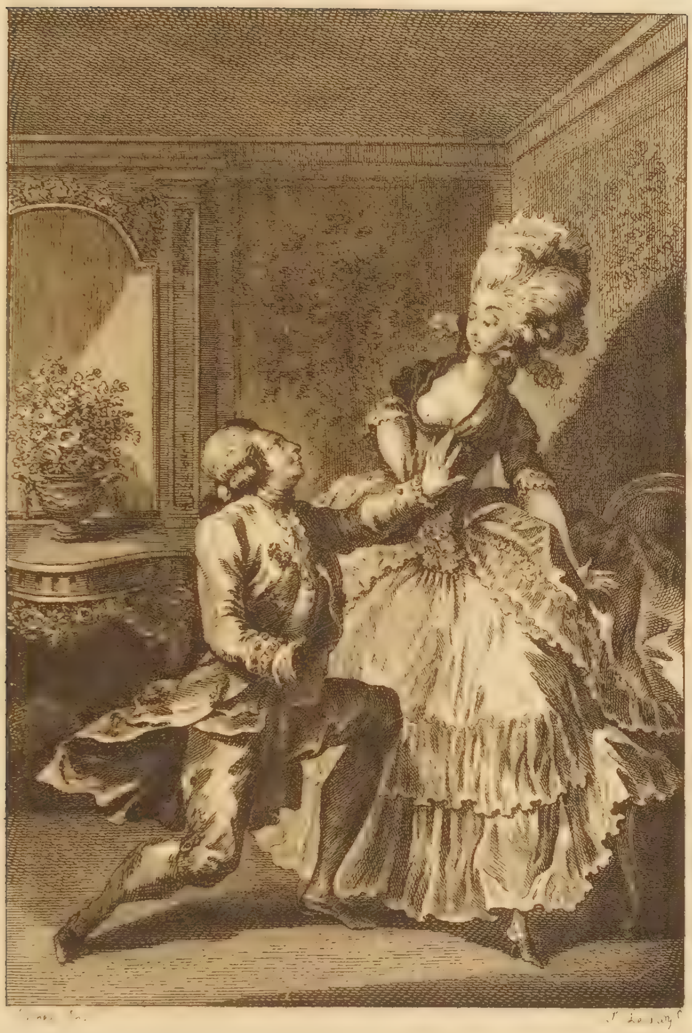
> *Iris, your faithful lover knows what it is to love and to adore you, and to burn with tenderness. The most ardent longing of his heart is, sighing, to tell this to his dear mistress.*

The 7th of July was the eve of my cousins' wedding day. I saw Rose for a moment very late in the evening, on my way to spend the night with the Servignés. Fearing that I should not see her at all, or only for a moment, I had hurriedly composed this quatrain:

> *Alas, dear Iris! (I grieve at the thought!) I was unable to see you or to avow my passion: but believe me, goddess of my heart, I never felt the ardour of my love so keenly.*

On the 8th, I seized a moment in the evening to undress and visit our quarter in my ordinary costume. I did not want to say anything to Rose about my cousins' wedding. Luckily she had no suspicions, and asked no questions; for I should not have dared to lie to her. She commented on my visit to the quarter of the Jesuits with M. and Mme Parangon, and I answered indifferently that we had been to see two of Madame Parangon's compatriots, who were also cousins of my own; she had helped these lads in the past, and now they were getting married. I pretended that I could not give her the letter and verses I had not written.

But on the 9th I could not refrain from telling Rose all that had happened, but cleverly enough not to annoy her. I made out that I had removed a



rival to her by marrying Edmée to my cousin. On the previous evening she had asked for a decastich on a given subject. I gave her these lines, which afterwards began the *Actress's* poem:

> *What a learned Doctor is the ingenious poet of* Joconde, Le Rossignol, Les Tableaux, *and* Le Cuvier, *when he tells us that, all over the world, Love, cunning trapper of female game, never fails in his attempts! Be it a simple lark, or blackbird, or white-tail, or little goose, all come to his farm-yard to peck the sweet grain of love. His treacherous snares are surely laid: be it full day, or twilight, or night, one will be caught in his golden meshes, more by his mirror; for, among these vain folk, there is not one, a single warbler or pert sparrow, who does not fall to the lure of the mirror. How can they avoid falling into the trap, when self-love finds an entrance by the eyes? . . . What lessons there are in a pretty face! Once a Beauty has seen herself, she may no longer be called a novice. . . .*

There I stopped; the first poem which Rose had sent me in her first letter followed.

Thursday the 10th was not a happy day, and this time I was almost certain that Rose made it so on purpose. Unseen I watched her making merry with three neighbours, Annette, Mme Durand the milliner, and Mme Chouin, and I said to myself: "I am going to have a pleasant evening, with the girl I love and a sensible good-hearted friend and a pretty woman; they are all enjoying themselves and I shall be happy and enjoy myself with them." Colombat appeared as I finished this monologue, and, taking his hand, I pointed to our mistresses, and asked what he thought of the group. "There's practically everything lovable in the town there," he answered. "And they are ours, my friend; let us join them and have a pleasant evening." We went towards them together; but directly Rose saw me, she assumed a serious and even sad demeanour, and curtseying to her neighbours, retired indoors. "What's the matter with her?" asked Mme Durand.

"Is she afraid of these gentlemen?" "I do not think so," answered Annette. "M. Colombat has always been polite to her, and Monsieur Nicolas . . ." "Does not make her miserable," said Mme Chouin, seeing that she paused. "That is quite natural; young men are made for young women. . . . Rose! Rose! Take care! . . . Yet it is not caprice . . ." "She has some reason!" said Mme Durand. "Come, Monsieur Nicolas, your hand upon your conscience?" "I have nothing with which to reproach myself," I answered. "My conduct has been impeccable: I have the highest esteem for Mademoiselle Rose, and all my actions have been in harmony with my feelings." "Can it be just a whim, then?" asked Mme Chouin. "I will go and look for her, as her mother is not in. . . ." She hurried to Rose, and found her sitting sadly in a corner. "What is the matter, dear friend?" she said, caressing her. "Has Monsieur Nicolas done anything to grieve you?" "He? Ah, neighbour, you know how I feel about him!" "Yes, but has he done anything wrong?" "No; but I cannot speak to him to-night and he knows it. My parents have found out that his father and mother visited the town without coming to see them. . . . I know why . . . and besides they had much to do and did not even spend a whole day here. . . . Go back and comfort him. . . ." The good woman said to the others: "She was called, and has to stay indoors," but she told me privately what Rose had said; and I could not help thinking to myself that Rose wanted all Thursdays to be unlucky. Verses written that evening:

> *The more passionately a man loves, fair Iris, the greater are his fears: but, alas! Forgive my too fond complaint! Deign to reassure me and calm my spirits. This evening I found such coldness in your eyes! God! Such impatience to be rid of me! Ah, can it be that the pure flame your lover lit in you has died? . . . But away, suspicions of an anxious lover: the fire which I feel is felt by Iris too.*

The 11th was noteworthy as marking a change in Rose's tactics. There was no change of plan, for she had always meant to do what she now did; but she wanted first to make me very much in love with her. That evening we were embarrassed and thwarted at every turn by her mother, and Rose said in a whisper: *"Perhaps she does not like us being friends. Come to the Vierge-de-Sel on the other side of the river next Sunday. I shall be there with my cousin Tangis."* (Dorothée Tangis, Canon Colombet's niece.) So here I was with a regular assignation; the usual resort of an amorous girl when her mother crosses her. . . .

From the 11th of July I no longer took my meals at Madame Parangon's table, but went to live with my cousins as had been arranged. I had the little room overlooking the garden, a charming spot which I have often remembered with regret. But how can I ever repay Catherine for her tender cares, or Edmée for her little attentions, or Père Servigné for his openhearted friendship, or my cousins for the happiness which the sight of their happiness gave me? True women and true wives, Edmée and Catherine were models of their sex, for their conduct was like my mother's, and she was the perfect wife. . . . When I painted a picture of their behaviour towards their husbands, their father and myself for Madame Parangon and her Toinette, they were moved to tears, and straightway went to congratulate them. The sisters' modest reception of their compliments put a crown on their delight, and Madame Parangon turned to me, saying: "I am really quite afraid lest these good cousins of yours should make you critical of my Fanchette." "Oh, you have nothing, nothing to fear from us, Madame!" exclaimed Edmée. "Mademoiselle Fanchette is a princess of the blood to my cousin." This made Colette smile. . . . The happiest time of my life was slipping away. . . . The thorns and brambles followed quickly on the roses. . . . Verses for the 11th:

> *What tricks rebellious Love plays on tender hearts! Yesterday the mischievous little God in his caprice told me, jeering, that he was the cause of my torments. Alas, fair Iris, what utter desolation! He prevented me from seeing all that I love in the world!*

I felt sad on Saturday the 12th. Madame Parangon had gone on a visit to her father, and I had just changed all my habits. Rose had made me realise the difficulties of our position, and that I could no longer spend my evenings with her: I found myself as lonely as a stranger among my old neighbours. . . . I felt that aching emptiness which one loved Person could have filled; but it was written that it should never be filled! I had deserted the ballrooms and lost sight of my friends and acquaintances of every class since my association with Rose. I took all my pleasures in her and through her. . . . When I went out for dinner, I laid wait for her in the *rue de la Providence*, down which she went daily to take some dinner to her sister, of whom she was very fond. She came at last, and I joined her. But the wily Rose gave me no more than a furtive greeting, and, slipping a letter into my hand, passed quickly on her way. I was so enchanted that I let her escape, almost as happy with her letter as with herself. It was the fifth. In it Rose stated definitely that we could no longer meet in the evenings, because certain pious persons had denounced us to the Curé Salomon, and he had spoken strongly to her mother, and intimated his wishes in an unqualified manner. She ended by bidding me not to miss our assignation. . . . Here is the letter:

> *"From the depths of the sorrow which oppresses me, what can I say to my lover, and how describe the torment of my heart without rending his heart? . . . My friend, I am convinced that your happiness is in my presence; I have proof*

of it a thousand times a day, not only in your prose and in your verse, but more indubitably in the expression of your face. Well, this happiness which each finds in the other's society has been a source of envy, and Jansenism, jealous of two hearts as innocently happy in their mutual love as were our fabled ancestors in Eden, has cried aloud in rage: 'They are children of sin' (through the pleasure their parents had in begetting them, no doubt?) 'and they must suffer. . . .' We are attacked, my friend, and criticism goes weeping, under the pious disguise of Jeudi and Cuisin, Chovot and Martin, to find the Curé Salomon. 'All is lost! The end of the world has come! Ouf! I can bear no more!' 'But what has happened?' 'The strangest thing! Evangelical morality is overturned! . . . People make love in your parish.' 'Make love!' exclaims Salomon. 'How terrible! . . . Ah, I'll soon put a stop to that. . . . And who is making this horrible scandal?' 'Need you ask? That little Rose who was educated by the Molinist Benedictines. . . .' 'Rose? Rose?' interrupts Salomon, and one would have thought he was going mad. 'Ha! I'll break her! . . . And who is this Jill's sweetheart?' 'A Monsieur Nicolas. He is the brother of those worthy men of Courgis; but he . . . is a libertine! . . . He defiled the little Baron girl, the eldest . . . and tried to tell the tale to Mlle Prudhôt. . . . He wrote verses to Mlle Paintendre. . . . A bad character! Ah Rose! Rose! . . .' 'Monsieur Nicolas?' said Jeudi. 'That modest lad who dined with me, and scarcely dared to raise his eyes?' 'Oh Parangon and his rascally printers have had him in hand since then!' (Do you recognise yourself?)

Then Salomon came to our house and treated my mother like a little girl, forbidding her, on the authority he holds from Jesus Christ, to allow me to see or speak to you. I laughed in his face and he came at me as though to strike me; but I cried out, and he was frightened. . . . And all he has gained is that we shall meet on Sunday, with no other witnesses than my cousin Dorothée and love unthwarted. I live for nought but that blissful moment . . . and if you will do the same, dear Anneaugustin, we may yet be happy. I am not sending you any verses as I have not had time to copy them, but you shall have your recompense on Sunday, when we will read the whole poem together.

Your Rose."

Looking back I marvel at the girl's cleverness! She loved me, she wanted to make me firmly attached to her, and found an infallible way of doing so by keeping me in a constant state of uncertainty. She did not know that there was an insurmountable obstacle. And it must be admitted that had I not been bound, and, in this event, had the impossible happened and neither Colombe nor Marianne secured me, Rose would have possessed me absolutely; she would have subjugated me and inspired an enduring passion, despite her sharp features, her harsh expression and her . . . goitre! It is a lesson to girls that, with ability, they need never despair of being attractive.

The height of her cleverness lay in reserving the most treasured favours, the most flattering treatment, such as are assignations, for times of grievous privation. How adroitly she put all the goodwill on her side, and credited all impediments and difficulties to her mother and her pious neighbours! (So Sara tricked me later, though with a different purpose, by decrying her mother in collusion with her mother.) How well she knew how to rouse my indignation against the pious, and especially against the Curé Salomon, who was, in fact, a hypocrite, and whom Rose detested for reasons of which I was unaware at the time! Rose had been in love with Brother Boulanger when she was sixteen, and had been in his room with the connivance of Brother Jean the porter. . . . But . . . the pious Chovot had seen something, and had warned the pastor, who spied on her from the recesses of a confessional. . . . He raged, but only privately, for Rose knew an anecdote against him, which she told me the Sunday of our assignation. In the preceding winter a young scatterbrain had burst into Curé Salomon's room unannounced, and had found him hidden behind a screen drawn in front of a big fire, with both hands plunged into the half-unlaced corset of Laurence, the younger of the Monin sisters. . . . The lady gave a little scream! . . . "I cannot get it out!" said the wily pastor, "but wait a moment." Then he scolded the lad for having entered thus. "Ah, Monsieur le Curé," answered the sly fellow ingenuously, "get it out! Why you were more ready to put it in!" This anecdote gave me a desire to have my revenge on Curé Salomon. So I went in search of Laurence Monin, and said to her: "You are ruined! A song has been sent us to print about your adventure last Winter with the Curé Salomon." "Ah, God! What shall I do?" "I am the only person who can make it disappear, but at the risk of being dismissed." "Oh, Monsieur Nicolas, I implore you, try to do me this favour." "But I must have my reward." "Everything that I possess is yours." "I want nothing but what you have so often granted to the Curé." "Mother of God!" "I must have that. Besides, Breugnot's verses have made me love you. . . ." This touched her. A few difficulties, and broken exclamations, and then she said: "Come, then; I will submit in a spirit of penitence." Ah, what sweetness! What vivacity! . . . I could not conceal my astonishment. "When one makes a sacrifice to God," she answered, "it must be done with the whole heart. . . ." I took care to write down the incident and send it to Salomon in a disguised hand. . . .

My visits had in fact drawn the Curé's attention to Rose, and her mother was compelled to make a show of severity; but both were no more than puppets in Rose's hands and she made them dance to suit her plans. She loved me, but she loved herself a hundred times more, and it mattered little to her whether I suffered, so long as she kept tight hold of a husband who suited her. Ah, Rose, Rose! You were an egoist (as are all townswomen)!

(My other verses have been torn out, and I shall say no more of them.)

On Sunday the 13th Rose took care not to miss this, our first assignation, which was calculated to exalt my passion to the point of frenzy. She appeared at the time agreed upon, with her cousin whom I knew but slightly. There is no doubt that Rose found these three or four hours which we spent together quite delightful. She had no anxieties, as she had been given permission to go for a walk with the Canon's niece; and we agreed that, when the moment came for parting, I should go quickly on ahead and, crossing the river, make my presence known in the vicinity of the Clock Tower. But I must describe this excursion, which is unique in my experience.

If ever Rose were amiable, if ever she were lovely and seductive, if ever she had power to instil rapture into my soul, and weave that charm which pastoral Nature gives to Beauty . . . or rather Beauty to Nature . . . it was on this occasion. I was waiting for my Fair at the far end of the bridge, quite near to the gardener Potard's house, when I noticed something moving in the apothecary *René Lebègue's* vineyard. I climbed up the bank over the ditch, and saw a man in the vinedresser's cottage whom I recognised as Rüttot. He was celebrating the mysteries of love with a well-dressed woman. . . . I withdrew in devout silence. At that moment I caught sight of Rose and her cousin, walking by the water's edge on the far side of the river. They vanished into the town through the postern of the Dyers, and I took advantage of their momentary disappearance to return to the Porte du Pont. . . . Rose blushed when they came upon me, and said to Mlle Tangis Colombet: "Why, there is a gentleman from our quarter, Cousin!" And then to me: "You were dreaming. You must be waiting for some one?" "Yes, I promised to meet some one here; but that does not diminish my pleasure in seeing two such amiable persons." They went on their way alone, and I followed after, as though taking a stroll by myself. At the other end of the bridge, when we were quite unobserved, I joined them again. Rose took one of my arms and told her cousin to take the other, and we walked towards the *Moulin-Judas.* "Were you getting impatient?" asked Rose. "I do not know how to answer that question. I have certainly been here a long time! But you fixed the hour for meeting; and then I know that a young girl is not always mistress of her time. . . . To say the minutes hung heavy on my hands would not be accurate, for I was thinking of you; to say I was impatient would not be true. . . . Still I was not quite easy in my mind until I saw you opposite the eastern point of the Ile d'Amour, and then I started, as though I had not expected you: hope and joy and laughter were about you and all the loves and graces: you were as a beautiful sunrise to a traveller who has left home before the dawn." "Do you not agree, Cousin, that it is pleasant to have a lover?" said Rose to Dorothée. "Listen and I will tell you all that has been in my mind for . . . some time. Before I merely vegetated: now every action has a reason, or at least an end and an importance. When I awake, my first thought is: 'Some one is thinking of me . . . longing for me!' I am no longer lonely, for some one is constantly aware of my existence and cherishes it. . . . If I died, he would mourn for me and shed many bitter tears. . . . I dress: nothing that I put on is a matter of indifference: *He may see me*, and I adorn instead of merely covering myself . . . for him. . . . My heart beats when I first go out: *What if I should meet him!* I know that it is not likely; that he is working at this time; but sometimes chance favours me. . . . I do not see him; and I am dissatisfied, not with him but with myself. . . . At last the hours pass, and it is midday: then I am sure to see him and be seen by him; I am aflame with longing, and yet sometimes I will hide away from him. . . . But at least I see him; and afterwards I reproach myself, for depriving him while satisfying my own desire. . . . Never do I love him so tenderly as after doing him this injustice. . . . I make amends by writing to him. . . . At other times I let him see me, and then how happy am I in the joy that shows in his eyes, in his covert salutation, in his walk, and in his furtive backward glances; for he dare not look at me openly. . . . But suffering comes to balance this happiness, and the sun is hidden from me when my lover has gone back into his workshop. . . . I call upon evening: *O Night! Sweet darkness! Come, and bring me back my lover!* Attentively, I watch the shadows lengthen, and the hand of our ancient clock creep past its Gothic figures: it has passed four; now five has come, and I wait impatiently for six. At last the strokes ring out over the fields, and die away, never to come again, and seven follows after. Then my heart beats: *In an hour! . . . In an hour* HE *will come. . . . I shall see him . . . perhaps his hand will close on mine. . . . He will give me a letter which will speak his thoughts, and I shall see if they wed with mine. . . .* Still lost in dreams, I hear eight strike, and every stroke is echoed in my heart. . . . We have supper; I cannot eat, but I am happy, which is better. . . . At last we leave the table, and I go shyly to the gate, saying to myself: *He cannot have come out yet!* . . . I lean over the door, and my eyes seek for him in despite of reason, and . . . I see him on the watch to catch my first glance. . . . He advances eagerly, and I withdraw, although I long . . . to fly to him. . . . A moment later I come out again . . . and sometimes he clasps my hand or . . . steals a kiss before I am aware . . . I feign coldness, as one hides behind a fan. . . . And if I did not keep up this pretence, how could I express all that I feel? . . . The evening passes. . . . Sometimes he sits next to me, and then I have to brace myself against the too ardent reaction of my senses. . . . More often we are separated, and then, without reserve, desire flames in me. Sometimes he cannot give me his letter, and then I am broken-hearted; yet my very pain is a pleasure, for my lover lays a charm over the suffering he causes. . . . And next day he drives away the cloud; for I receive his thoughts of the day before with those of the day. Secretly I read and re-read them a hundred and a hundred times; I recall what has occupied my mind, and join my thought to his. . . . And that is not all, Cousin! A thousand charming fancies show me my lover crowned with my fond caresses, happy through me and through me alone, beside himself, and looking up at me as at a goddess. . . . Ah, how sweet it is to have a lover! . . . There is but one drawback; the misery of losing him! . . ."

While Rose was speaking, we had reached the meadows, and alders and poplar trees sheltered us from profaning eyes. I threw myself upon my knees before Mlle Lambelin, saying: "My goddess! What girl is comparable with you?" "Rise, my friend," she answered. "You make me happy now, and will always do so, by the mere thought: He loves me; my slightest action is of interest to him; the sight of me is a pleasure to him; his mind is filled with me; my thoughts and my opinion are more to him than the thoughts and the opinion of all the rest of the Universe! . . . Oh my friend, what does not a girl owe to her lover! He gives her a second life; he is her second father, even before he has developed in her that exquisite sensation of which I have but a confused idea! . . . And if you knew what a lover owes to his mistress! If you knew how she makes him and his happiness her sole concern! How she makes him the god of every thought and every desire! . . . You love me, that I do not doubt; but you would adore me if you could read the hidden depths of my heart." "Then I have read, O my Rose," I exclaimed, "for I do adore you!" And I meant it. . . . Dorothée Tangis smiled: "Really, you quite make me want to fall in love!" she said. "But choose carefully, dear friend!" answered Rose. "Lovers such as mine are rare, and when found they are a treasure, to be guarded with every care. . . . See what I have done to-day: do you think it costs nothing to deceive my parents? But . . . we are persecuted; I must comfort my friend and sustain him against reverses, and assure him of my constancy by proving the stability of my affection. . . . And I do it because his heart is worthy of it; and because I want to keep it. . . . If you only knew, dear Dorothée, how coarse are ordinary men!" "I do know it," answered Dorothée. "That is why I am so much surprised. I do not seem to recognise men as I know them in the picture you draw."

When we reached the dairy, I ordered milk and cream cheese and raspberries, and while we were waiting, we explored the garden, the very one in which I had gathered posies for Mlles Laloge, Lalois and Dugravier on another occasion. I picked some flowers for my two companions, and they put them in their bosoms. "I must make the most of them now," said Rose, "for I shall not be able to take them home. And yet I should not like to throw them away." "I will hide them," answered Dorothée, "and when Monsieur Nicolas passes our door, I will give him yours; for they will smell sweeter after being there" (pointing to Rose's breast). I kissed Dorothée's hand (she was the best of girls after my Toinette) and then buried my face in Rose's flowers and breathed their scent in combination with her breath, and the odour of the flowers was really more delicious for it. . . . Also I declaimed in my rapture:

> *Is there any sweeter scent? Whence comes it that I sigh? Love is nestling among these flowers, and it is he I breathe. What a perfume! But how keen! It is a double dose of love; for Love is nestling against the heart of my sweet Rose.*

During the meal, Rose explained in detail what she meant to do to keep her heart exclusively for me. She told us how a M. Drin had asked for her in marriage, to save her honour (so he said) from being endangered by me, and how she had refused him although her mother favoured him. She added that while avoiding any appearance of sulking with her parents she meant to lead so retired and so unsociable a life that no one would be able to approach her. And should I be forced for a time to leave the town, she vowed that she would dress in sombre colours throughout my absence, in sign of mourning, and find pretexts for never wearing anything more elaborate than a mob cap upon her head. Above all she would make a great show of piety, so as to disarm criticism and avert any sort of reproach: "This I should do, even if you were away four years; so you would find me on your return. . . . But on that day, I should dress up as I am now, even if it were a working day; I should go to church to thank God for your return, and to pray him to grant you happiness." We were all three moved by her words. At last Rose smiled, and added: "A young boarder at the Convent, who knew Italian, used to sing some words that Anneaugustin will never be able to say of me:

Grazie agl'inganni tuoi,
Alfin respiro, o Nice!
Alfin d'un infelice
Ebber gli Dei pietà . . .
Sento da lacci suoi,
Sento che l'alma è sciolta;
Non sogno questa volta,
Non sogno libertà.

Mancò l' antico ardore,
E son tranquillo,
Che in me non trova sdegno
Per mascherarsi amor;
Non cangio più colore,
Quand il tuo nome ascolto;

Quando ti miro in volto,
Più non mi batte il cor.

Sogno; ma te non miro
Sempre ne' sogni miei;
Mi desto, e tu non sei
Il primo mio pensier;
Lungi da te m'aggiro,
Sanza bramarti mai:
Son teco, e non mi fai
Nè pena, nè piacer.

Di tua beltà ragiono,
Nè intenerir mi sento:
I torti miei rammento,
E non mi so sdegnar.
Confuso più non sono,
Quando mi vienti appresso;
Col mio rivale istesso
Posso di te parlar.

Volgimi il guardo altero,
Parlami in volto umano;
Il tuo disprezzo è vano,
E' vano il tuo favor.
Che più l'usato impero
Que' labbri in me son anno;
Quegli occhi più non sanno
La via di questo cor.

Quel ch'or m'alletta o spiace
Se lieto, o mesto sono,
Già non è più tuo dono,
Già colpa tua non è.
Che senza te mi piace
La selva, il colle, il prato;

Ogni soggiorno ingrato
M'annoja ancor con te.

Odi s'io son sincero:
Ancor mi sembri bella;
Ma non mi sembri quella
Che paragon non a.
E (non t'offenda il vero)
Nel tuo leggiadro aspetto
Or vedo alcun difetto,
Che mi parea beltà.

Quando lo stral spezzai
(Confesso il mio rossore)
Spezzar m' intesi il core,
Mi parve di morir.
Ma per uscir di guai,
Per non vedersi oppresso,
Per racquistar se stesso,
Tutto si può soffrir.

Nel visco, in cui s'avvenne
Quell' augellin, talora
Lascia le penne ancora;
Ma torna in libertà:
Poi le perdute penne
In pochi dì rinnova:
Canto divien per prova,
Ne più tradir si fa.

So che non credi estinto
In me l' incendio antico;
Perch'io si spesso il dico,
Perche tacer non so.
Quel naturale istinto,
Nice, a parlar mi sprona,

Per cui ciascun ragiona
Dei rischi che passo.

Dopo il crudel cimento
Narra i passati sdegni,
Di sue ferite i segni
Mostra il guerrier cosi;
Mostra cosi contento
Schiavo che usci di pena,
La barbara catena
Che sosteneva un dì.

Parlo; ma sol parlando,
Me soddisfar proccuro;
Parlo; ma nulla io curo
Che tu mi presti fe.
Parlo; ma non dimando
Se approvi i detti miei;
Ne se tranquilla sei
Nel ragionar di me.

Io lascio una incostante;
Tu perdi un cor sincero:
Non so di noi primiero
Qual s'abbia a consolar.
So che un si fido amante
Non troverà più Nice;
Che un' altra ingannatrice
*E'facile a trovar!"**

Rose sang this most agreeably, and we listened enchanted. "Did you understand?" she asked me. "Certainly," I answered. "Moreover I will translate the first verse fluently:

Thankless one, I am sure at last that your love is false, I breathe again! The Gods have had pity on me, and I am no longer in your power. . . ."

---

*This is taken from Metastasio. [Ed.]

"That's it," interrupted Rose, "I did not know it had been translated. . . . But I have something more important here: the continuation of the verses I sent you. They were part of a little poem in which I set our imaginary loves to rhyme. I will read it as I cannot leave it with you. You will see how I have joined it to your opening stanzas; that is why I asked for them: and I have been careful to include the poems you wrote me of your own accord." "I will read it, if you will allow me?" I said. "Willingly. My verses will sound better from your lips:

First I read the introduction which will be found on p. 351; then the two fragments which Rose added to her two first letters; and then these three lines which had been omitted:

> *The sequence of events forbids me to anticipate a day spun for you from black spindles, a day propitious to my hero's passion. . . .*
>
> *His wanderings* (so the story runs) *brought Anneaugustin at last, sad and despairing, to the banks of the Seine. Touched by his keen pain, Love led him far from curious eyes, and appeared to him, wreathed in flowers. The gentle Zephyrs wafted his chariot of delights upon their sweet breath. A Spirit (I may add), the careful Myrtilus of this chariot, drove the fair structure: he held the reins of Pleasure, and Sighs groaned about the axle-trees. But I will avoid the fashionable craze. The verses of to-day are a gallery or studio of airy pictures painted according to the whim of the student and in despite of art. To complete my hero's portrait and bring his story to a conclusion, I shall say that Love drew him from his melancholy, and addressed him as follows: "I come to lighten your misfortunes. Take this little book: it is the flower of gallantry, the elixir of words, the veritable jargon dear to my streets. This talisman has garnered as many Fairs as, in the sight of Mars, perfidious Englishmen have fallen to French valour. The light and agile shade of a young Abbé, frisking it in the Elysian Fields, composed this Manual for my mother, weaving it out of the gallant speeches which he had used with success on earth to triumph swiftly over the virtue of too harsh a Beauty. His hand was still redolent of musk as he*

wrote this excellent book. He bound it in a gay morocco, such as his salacious thoughts had so many times seen slinking away in stealthy haste. Take this book: I have had it approved by Pleasure, my Censor in Cythera. A single lesson taught by this book will quickly prove to your mistress that every heart which is tributary to my flame must pay its fee. Offer it in homage to your Iris to-morrow at her house. Let her but utter a single prayer from it, and I shall win through her vows more than one pilgrimage to my altars. Together you shall bear your journey's expenses; and with my bow. . . . I shall control the manner of it." So Love spoke: then suddenly he disappeared into a cloud to mount again to Heaven. The sound of his wings beat upon the air, ploughing some amorous cipher there.

The God's welcome and his agreeable speech filled Augustin's whole heart; his face broke into a look of tender joy; the dawning glow of a sweet hope restored calm to his wounded soul; in eager expectation he awaited the dear moment appointed for his happiness, letting his thoughts take wing into the future, so tardy to a lover! With the consoling Manual in his hands, the wish to see the treasures it contained led his impatient fingers to open it. Alas! The title filled him with despair at first.

A Catechism! . . . *Outraged and indignant, he exclaimed: "Love has deceived me. . . . Ah, what relation can there be between this, doubtless, infidel little book, and the heart of the mutinous Beauty whose scorn is poisoning my life? . . . Was a Catechism ever the bait with which to tempt Beauty in her leisure to take the fish? The very name would make a woman run away. Could the contemplation of a Catechism, with its cold constraining* ergos, *demonstrate that amorous travail is the gift of sober reason? . . . Why can it not be Ovid, or La Fontaine! They knew the heart in all its seasons; physicians of the gallant empyrean, their eyes saw straight and true: they have painted the dawn of Love, his progress, his phases, his return; things fell out as they foretold, guided by the thermometer of real pleasure; a man describes well what he has felt."*

Such was the poor lover's plaint, and he was on the point of tearing the damned fop's elegant work to pieces. Three times, in fear, he withheld his hand from treating scornfully a gift of Love, to whom no fond lover is ever impolite. Again he opened the god-sent book, again he thought the title odious: but on the next page he found divine words, and a shaft of light dried the tears *in his eyes. What has he read, then, on this smiling paper? . . . The Abbé's decalogue is already working; so that he is ready to praise the very type of this wretched book, the mere sight of which a moment before offended his eyes. We love everything about what pleases us. Illusion, our common mother, changes seeming ugliness to grace.*

In a picture which he was drawing, Love sought a place for Augustin. He saw there Colin kneeling to Isabeau, and lamenting in graceful verse the heavy burden of her haughtiness. He saw the relentless shepherdess, admiring her beauty in a stream, put her case to Love and accuse herself of being cold. Could he fail there to recognise his Iris? The likeness was too unmistakable. "That is herself . . ." he thought. "May Love, in taking her this book, insinuate himself into her every sense! May this young Fair, like Isabeau, secretly blame herself for her severity! She has no need to consult the lying augury of an empty mirror, that frivolous child of art; for in my frank and shining eyes she may see her ever pure beauty, and my guileless and undying love."

The greedy lover devours page after page, finding on each a fresh aspect of the heart. Sometimes the Abbé sketched his portraits in a gallant, lightly vaudeville manner; or, like a clever pleader, undertook to defend the French against the charge of inconstancy: in short the book was a collection of contemporary mannerisms, of brilliant sophistries, of original trifles and affected verbiage which, if intended seriously, would have been distasteful. Anneaugustin drenched the book in tears: he marvelled at the sparkling treasure, much as Æneas in his wisdom saw and caressed the golden bough which was his ample passport to the infernal regions.

"Hours fly quickly," said the burning Austin. "O Star of day, speed on your course! And do you, cold Night, make way for the dawn, and let the white morning shine! Even if Love has bidden you to pause, this time refuse his prayer! Night weighs upon me, and I have need of day; that happy day which shall see my loved one bend her heart to tender sentiment, cast aside her proud disdain, and at last adore her lover Augustin."

Sympathetic to his wish, the thick night draped the skies in black. Morpheus wafted his poppy fumes with skill, and gave the young lover peaceful sleep; for sweet hope bears rest.

You, gentle Book, need it be said, were my hero's pillow. Just as that Conqueror and master of vast empire, terror of Gods and scourge of men, always had

Homer in his hands; so this inimitable book lay all night beneath his white pillow; and at his waking, the conqueror's soul fed delectably upon the divine meats of the charming poem.

Shall I tell what happy dreams this book brought to our lover? Poetry does not abide by the truth; it owes its being to error and caprice. Well, let us say that an entrancing swarm of those Plays and Laughters, Pleasures and Graces, which always follow in a lover's steps, visited him in a flattering dream. One would open the seductive book and quote the gracefully moulded words which our hero already knew by heart: another commented on the Abbé, the author of the book, saying: "It was a pity that Fate wreaked her wrath so early on this fine teacher."

O worldly Abbés, fair Ladies in short mantles, elegant assemblage of amber and red, on the banks of the dark river you must wander and sigh for your earthly loves! Death takes you in the morning of your days, even as he strikes the village pastor, living contented beneath his virtuous roof, not sacrificing sense to fashion, and changing his neck-bands once in every six months.

A young Laughter, shedding his first tears, exclaimed: "Poor man! He was, like Tartuffe, sober in all things. In truth, the maxims of Rome were not his daintiest dish. A lover of abstinence, like Tartuffe, one fast day he ate a chicken, drank off ten cups of an indiscreet champagne and, to calm his boiling blood, cradled his chaste tender youth on the bosom of indolence. On waking, the anchorite flew to the Marquise at the temple of Thalia, and quizzed Julia in the wings. Soon after, at a little supper, he was busy with twenty young girls. He had the art of sparkling, a pretty wit to join the game; he was ever the courtier. . . . The brilliant stripling made a better coquette than any at Paphos. But to die of indigestion! Of a wine of Aï, without weathering the storm? Cruel fate! So fair a head should have fallen to love's arrow; and you have robbed us of yet another victim."

So spoke our weeping Laughter. During his panegyric, one of the Pleasures came to cheer the lover, and showed him in a magic picture the proud Iris, in pity for his torment, scarcely with one hand defending her charms from his timid mouth's quick theft, and not denying him a kiss.

Shall I be believed if I say that, seeing this, the Graces made wry faces, and that their virtue was alarmed? No, no, the time for modesty is past, and the Graces are just like other Beauties; behind their fans they approved it all. Let *us then leave the modest hussies to their foretaste of our pleasures. Let us dismiss them, that their gallant train may serve some other fond couple: and let us awaken Austin, who has taken fright at being so long in dreamland.*

In the meantime, O splendid enemy of a charming God, O fair, harsh Iris, what are you doing alone in your home? Foolishly secure in your obduracy, have you no presentiment of the dread blow which Love is preparing for you? Fly! . . . But no, pity betrays my judgment; tremble rather! For your punishment must serve as an example to those straitlaced prudes who deck themselves in feeble maxims, not knowing that in this gallant age, woman is but a vegetating goose till public gossip sets a lover to her credit.

Now broke that first day when the sun renews his course and loads us with another year, casting aside the old year's loves and hastening the destiny of mortals. A solemn day, when the cold Compliment, with his companions the insipid Gift, the false Kiss, the empty Bow, invade all France under a thousand masks, from the humble water-carrier to the Great who hoist their flags. Women, abbés, clerks, scholars, idlers, monks, lacqueys, grey sisters, horses, like a flock of geese, fly, jostle and elbow each other in the streets. A philosopher – but is there one here? . . . I will invent one, possibly a freak, certainly original, since he thinks. Far from the crowd in a retired corner he bemoaned his fellows' extravagance. "Where is this crowd of madmen rushing to?" he said. "Why should this day, more than another, be devoted to an exchange of wishes? They but invoke the God of Lies, with stucco compliment, and gifts prepared in hate; their brilliant insincerities, a flatterer's verbiage, do not even come from the heart's rind; veneer is always an impostor." Thus, in his sober dwelling, the uncouth but just and virtuous man expressed himself, chiding the mob of hurrying fools. . . . Alas! I was of their number, and deserved his censure as much as any.

To flatter a miserly Mæcenas, a bloated pig, a libidinous hornet, whom two horses can scarce draw in his vast house upon wheels, I have drunk more water at the fountain of learning than ever any fat Prior poured of Burgundian nectar into his vinous paunch. And yet I can strike no note upon my lyre worthy of the laurels of Melpomene.

If I had needed to sketch the portrait of this gross man in ribald song, to paint the laughter wrinkling all his brow, the obscene pleasures graven on his face, and his immeasurably heavy wit imprisoned in a massive mound of fat, my hand, *without being false to nature, could trace other sons of Plutus in him, whose dishonestly gained riches have yet assigned their rank and fixed their virtues.*

I am acquainted with some such who are great of heart: among these rare ones shy Poverty finds a shelter, and puny Innocence's harvest does not wither. But while I point this empty moral in cold and artless verse, I see Austin playing a finer part. A truce to these moralisings, and away digressions! For we must follow him and see by what artifice he will present the Book. You must not flag, O Muse; bestir yourself, and let this bright portrait seem even greater than your subject.*

Powdered, prinked out like any dancing girl, more faultlessly arrayed than an attorney's clerk about to give his hand to the girl collector, and armed with the magic book, Austin, to guard his finery, allows himself the New Year's gift of carriage, a poor affair but serviceable enough for a lover wishing to escape the mud. The morocco volume, bound by Leullier, is in his pocket, all gilt and shining: the carriage starts, it flies, it stops before the heroine's door. Austin, astonished at its speed, thinks the horses and chariot must be in pieces.

Seeing them safe and sound, he says: "My coursers, it seems to me as if some mighty god, as Racine has less aptly said, had spurred your muddy flanks upon this happy journey." So saying, he leaped down, paid his Myrtilus, and lightly entered to his Iris. The house was flooded with callers; his Fair was still at her toilet, tying a ribbon about her knotted tresses. When she saw Austin, the comb fell from her hair, and she fled. . . . The throng arrests her. Her lover embraces her knees, weeping. "Leave me," she said, "or face my anger! . . ."

Events as sad as they were strange! Austin thought that a Beauty and the Gods always looked favourably upon a gift, and exhibited sixteen shining oranges. But alas! these fine golden fruits rekindled Iris's anger. Such was the effect of the fatal apple which brought hellish discord among three fair Goddesses. According to Vergil, and a thousand other famous authors, it was of gold: but do we read in any story that the metal was tested? Colour often gives a false impression; and in spite of these authors, believe me the golden apple was no more than orange. My theory is the more probable since Juno and Venus and Pallas were crowning their feast with a dessert when this apple appeared on the table.

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*This Book called by Rose a *Catechism*, and the Actress's *Almanac*, was only the History of the Metropolis of Lower Burgundy, a gift from Anneaugustin.

Unhappy fruits, what a fate was yours! You left your garden in Portugal to see your liquid life run out upon the floor of an impious stranger woman! This fair traveller fruit is pursued by a fatality. Ah, dreadful crime! Iris in a fury stamps and crushes with her cruel foot and presses out the murmuring nectar from this golden fruit. Austin bewailed the innocent fruit: why had he not a weapon to his hand? Ah, how gladly would he have injured himself!

Happily an old gossip, a bedizened spectre but good enough at heart, now joined them; not as a spoil-sport, for, although a woman, she loved harmony. Showing her three teeth, she spoke as follows:

"What is it, children, that is upsetting you? You seem to be a pretty pair of lovers. How now, what crime has this gentleman committed to make you so vehemently revolt against him? In my spring time, my dear, I was pretty, like you, and I had a good heart; I used to pardon such poor gallants. Love is like a troop of naughty soldiers: deny him his ration, and he will turn mutinous, grumble, pillage and strike! By Saint Joseph! . . . a little kiss quickly, lest worse befall."

In a transport of gratitude our weeping lover threw himself upon the old woman, and bedewed her dry and wrinkled face with twenty kisses. The tough old creature gulped them all, screaming with delight! But at last she begged for mercy, fearing lest her neck be dislocated by such repeated assaults and never resume its tottery position.

The onlookers, with malicious smiles, brought a charge against this female monster; but the laughter at least was on her side. I appeal to any old lady; what would you have done if a handsome boy of a lover had regaled your horny muzzle with the hot kisses fit for a young girl? . . . Humbly you would have accepted them all. And so did this hideous hag, fortunately for us! . . . Delicious moment! The threatening anger of our Iris had given way to a lively sparkle of amusement which twinkled in her dear eyes: how could she look angrily upon such a diverting scene? She laughed so much that a lace betrayed her and her modest bodice opened to show an elegant bust which the discreet lover's eye respected. Let us say a word of the secret emotion Austin felt when his mistress maliciously made fun of the charms of this shrill and ancient Venus. Subtle courtier that he was, he joined his weapons to hers; virtue itself is sometimes an ill-speaker; and Iris caught to perfection the hardly Christian art of mocking her own kind. The good old woman was not their equal, and would *have fainted at another blow. But at that moment, the Demon who inspires visits dispersed the polite crowd; and happily took with them the old lady to recite her cursed proverbs to the merchant's wife or the indifferent Monseigneur.*

Facile Gresset, French Catullus, charming painter whose gay colours make the merest trifles seem important, come and enliven my arid numbers. I need the seductive colours, half lights and the compliant flowers, with which your portraits are adorned. Under your brush, Austin and his Iris would be immortalised so as to enchant the ear; their glowing features, which I have so poorly shown, would be a marvel touched by your pencil! Pindus for you is a flowery hillside where you see nought but clear sky and limpid water. Terrible contrast! To my darkened sight everything is Chaos; I can feel only coldness; still at this moment I am chilled. . . . I make my humble excuses to my heroes. Burn bright, my Muse, and, well or ill, continue in these words:

Our two lovers being left alone together, Austin seized his opportunity; and Iris was willing enough to hear anything he had to say in honourable fashion. . . . I quote his very words. . . .

(Here follows a gallant speech of my own.
See above, p. 336)

Thus did our brown-haired lover open his amorous campaign. His wayward mistress tries to hide her growing embarrassment: Austin perceives it and does not misinterpret it. A passing sigh, the Beauty dreams . . . all evidence of love. Her lover pressed his suit, and made his vows. Iris listened to him, and each of them knew well how matters stood. Iris feels . . . love overcoming her, and stammers:

"I would willingly respect you; but, I pray you, stifle this cursed flame, this strange emotion! I should weary of it as quickly as you." "Respect, you say? What a fate? Lazy, monotonous and sleepy sentiment! Ah! learn the power of love! A word, a gesture, smile or look pour precious balm upon the heart, which is the happier for its trouble. . . . Tender cares, fears, alarms, everything has a charm for lovers, which only they can know and can express. . . . If your heart would sweetly feed upon a new art of love, I will give you a delightful Manual, a treasured gift from the God who is my master. Deign to profit by the reading of it; it contains most exquisite precepts. . . ." So he spoke; and soon before the

eyes of Iris shone in his hands the delectable Book. "A Catechi . . .?" "Yes, certainly. . . ." "But why?" "Will you read it, Madame? . . ." "Goodness, no!" "But take it as a New Year's gift on this memorable day." "What, I accept a present! . . . Really you are astonishing! . . ." During this debate Austin kept boldly pressing the book into his mistress's hands, and she as often refused to take it.

Poor Cate. . . ! *You were more tossed from hand to hand than a gazette in a coffee-house, from which twenty loungers are eagerly trying to fill their empty heads. But could you be refused? . . . All girls are naturally inquisitive. You were sent flying on to the toilet table; and while aloud she swore she would not read you, to herself she vowed she would. The astute Austin made no reply, knowing too well the outcome. A student of feminine mentality, he cut his gallant visit short. He seemed to see the divine Manual fingered, read, and re-read by his mistress as soon as, by a well-timed departure, he had given her the chance of privacy.*

So, full of hope, he bade his Fair goodbye, determining to return next day, to see if her heart was less rebellious and had felt the effect of the Catechi . . . "In you alone, O potent Book," he said, "lies my hope of eternal happiness or torment!" O God of Paphos, you truly prophesied that this Book would give you Iris for a pupil to be taught.

Hardly had Austin left the maid when the accursed tempter, Satan, *guided her eyes straight to the Manual; thence to fingering its shining vellum, thence to casting a shy glance over its pages, only to shut it up again. . . . So does a prentice burglar, with a trembling hand, take up, put down and take again the strong-box which he means to steal.*

We may be sure our Iris read the Book at last; drawing from every page a burning and delicious poison which speedily creates a tempest in her heart; and that malicious corsair Love rammed her frail bark amidships. But when he brings naughty books to bear, like brazen cannon, no need to board the female ship; he riddles it with shot and wrecks it.

Your virtue, rebel Iris, is now drooping to its decline! An amorous drunkenness slips from the charmed pages into you. The absent Austin, handsome, reasonable, rises before your eyes: what more is needed to excuse his innocent avowals?

Rare little Book, you wrought more havoc in our Agnès, made learned in a *day, than Grécourt's work, artfully introduced into a convent, taught the nuns of tender trickery and worldly ways and love's devices.*

All that day, delicious book, you were our Iris's only food. When we begin the year with Love, he will dog our footsteps to its end! Kneeling to her entrancing teacher, the Fair forgets her fineries and her visits: one is lost to all else when the heart is captured.

"Charming Austin!" cried Iris. "Why cannot you hear me now? If I saw you, my submissive heart would have no fear of seeming over fond."

Take comfort, Fair one; wait for the morrow: Austin will come; he will not keep you waiting as do our Marquises, and you will taste the value of his transports. Sleep. Beauty must sleep, for rest makes her colour fresh. Put the Book away for this night, and dream a little; that will do marvels for you.

And thou, O God of hearts, advise her lover, that he flies to the Fair at dawn; picture her ardour to him and give me warmth to sketch them faithfully; fan with your wings the dying embers of my fainting muse. What was our heroine's happy dream? It was more vivid even than her lover's, and though the seasoned reader will divine it, yet we must tell it briefly. She thought she saw the pages of the gallant Catechi . . . suddenly change into burnt almonds: her Medor, at her knees, moistened the sweetmeats with his lips, and she then sucked them eagerly. How many the Fair one crunched between her teeth, I know not, but since Austin had given them so sweet a flavour she could eat abundantly. All this in dream: one lives extravagantly in dreams, but reality brings poverty. . . . The giver is not always real.

You Cytherean Soothsayers and Mages, whom Pâris, *scheming witch, leads triumphant to the Love Sabbat, explain the mystery of this fair dream to my ignorant or curious reader, while I fly back to my heroes.*

Already day has shone upon their eyelids, and both are ready to embark on their adventure, and seek in it the reward of travail.

(Here the Censor cut out thirty or forty very free lines, which
I do not remember well enough to restore.)

More alert than dunning tailor battering from day-break on the door of some author poor as Homer, with shining eyes and a heart high with hope, Austin appeared upon the threshold of his shepherdess, who wished no greater *happiness than to see him. Now no harsh Beauty she, of the proud heart and angry looks: Love had scorched her haughty soul with the poignant flames that Apollo's sister felt for her Endymion. It is said that Iris spoke first:*

"You have important business in this neighbourhood so early?" Lovers, prize the answer Austin made her: "What other business could I have than to see you, adore you, please you? Doubtless my visit is presumptuous? But your bright eyes assure me of my pardon." "Fine words! You know the jargon. . . . But it is new to me and makes me blush: I am no great lady, and I beg you to use simpler language to me."

Gallant Manual, Iris wanted words to fit your pictures, and Love had seen to it that Augustin should, this time, understand the artifice, and take the bait. Bolder, and in a stronger voice, he skilfully turns the conversation to the Book.*

"If I am any judge," he said, "(and Love gives taste), a thousand novels where the author scatters portraits as false as they are tedious, are not worth the smallest miniature which smiles upon the heart from this happy Manual. Each poem is a child of Nature, no error there offends the eye; the heart is moved by every incident. Confess that you have read it, Madame?"

If I should say that the Fair in anger prudently denied this charge, I should lie as surely as the lady's maid who, to serve her mistress in her gallantries, drunk with some new conquest, pacifies the husband with some fairy tale. I shall say frankly that, as anyone would expect, our Fair could only but feebly defend herself against such sweet speech; while the charming colour rising to her cheeks spared her all need of confession. In love one prizes silence; it is the tenderest expression of the heart.

Austin sees happiness approaching. He tries to kiss her hand; she withdraws it, chiding; but in her secret heart she would not have him take her too literally; all she wants is to fall with decency. . . . In a little time Austin is master of the seductive language of gallantry, and pours the sweet nothings Love whispers to him into her ear. This God is better than any careful notes. First he swore by his honour *that he would confine himself to simple gallantries. . . . And Iris agreed to listen* with all her heart.

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*The forty famous illustrations of Aloisia had been inserted in the Book. Rose had taken care to remove them.

> *"Well, and what came of it?" cries some old fox, some veteran of Paphos eager for diversion. "Tell us, chatterbox, was Love victorious? Bring your hero to the point!" I cannot; for the story tells that some one inopportunely knocked upon the house door, where our lovers were. Yet another complimentary visitor, an everlasting uncle and a merciless talker. Austin, as he went away, wished him to the Devil; and so also, no doubt, did Iris.*
>
> *But do not think, my merry reader, that Love stopped at this prelude: he quickly brought the happy moment when our Iris, in the shades of secrecy, crowned her lover with the tender flowers that bloom on Cythera, and more than once.*
>
> *Four suns were witness of this sweet commerce; four? . . . too many for the honour of our place! A Phryne crossed our Austin's vision, pricked him, and made his Iris seem ugly. I know not what attraction these charmers have; but I see husbands with wives far better than their mistresses, who yet are shamefully wounded by these traitresses and are but husbands to their wives, lovers to* Doris.
>
> *A pledge of love is but a frivolous pledge. Austin is no more than an inconstant knave; and Iris clearly understands her misfortune. Perhaps the foolish girl breaks a glass or an innocent chair in her despair? But let us rather think some Medor comforts her: a lover comes for every lover gone.*

"I inserted the final stanza," said Rose laughing, "much as the ancients made human sacrifice, to turn aside the wrath of Love by a display of modesty."

After the meal, the reading, and Rose's sententious observation, Dorothée went out, and Rose said to me: "Happiness calls you, Austin, fugitive as Opportunity and, like her, to be seized by the skirts." Austin did not have to be asked twice, and found a delicious mistress in Rose, but a trifle too knowledgeable. This, at the time, he attributed to her extreme sagacity.

At last Dorothée came back and pointed out that it was getting late. Rose turned pale when she glanced at my watch (my watch! The gift of

Madame Parangon and pledge of my constancy to Mlle Fanchette! O human heart!). As I said at the beginning of this incident, she made me leave first.

When I reached the Clock Tower, I saw Annette and Colombat sitting in front of M. Bourdeaux's door, and joined them. "I have not seen Rose all this afternoon, except for a minute," Annette said to me. "She is out with her cousin Dorothée," answered Colombat, taking the words out of my mouth. "If you had known, you could have joined them. They went towards the Vierge-de-Sel to have something to eat at the dairy." "I never join parties unless I am wanted." "That is all very well, but all's fair in love." "A fine principle!" cried Annette. "What I meant was, anything that goes to prove one's love." I left the two children, to offer my respects to Rose's parents, who had just appeared at their door. Then I made a point of going towards the Clock Tower, which was in the opposite direction to that by which Rose and Dorothée would return; but I slipped round behind the Grands-Jardins, and rejoined my new-made wife at the bottom of the *rue de la Fricauderie*; and here Rose gave me back my nosegay. With this trophy of my victory I returned to my cousins, and set it in Edmée's bosom.

It was her bridal Sunday,* and I had scarcely appeared at the celebrations. However, knowing that I was to be Mlle Fanchette's husband, they imagined that I had heard from Vermenton, and had been busy executing Madame Parangon's commissions. I was welcomed with delight. "At least you will be with us for supper," said M. Servigné. "You must forgive me," I said. "I have been detained all day by . . . indispensable business." "No apologies among friends! *Libertas!* Your home is here, but you are as

*This is the festive gathering among French peasants on the Sunday after the wedding. [Ed.]

free as though you lived at the *Porte Champinot.* We are just sitting down to supper. Are you hungry? You seem to have eaten nothing since you have been with us." "But I shall do justice to your table to-night." I watched my two new cousins, and they seemed very happy, even Edmée: no doubt, seeing my abstraction, to which she had no clue, and my preoccupied and pensive air, she congratulated herself on having secured a handsome lad, who belonged wholly to her and was never absent-minded. I begged her to keep the posy which was nestling against her white bosom. She thought it came from Madame Parangon or her youngest sister, and when she went to bed, I saw her place it reverently by her bedside. . . . I was unrestrainedly gay at table. "Splendid, splendid!" cried the good Servigné. "That is how I like to see you!" "Yes," said Catherine, "but my cousin is going to live in society, and I have noticed that society does not always make the people who belong to it happy." "Ah!" I exclaimed, "were it not for . . . the strongest reasons, how much I would have preferred the peaceful life I see around me here! But I do not think I am fated to be happy." "Children, I fear lest that may be a prophecy," said Père Servigné, "for Monsieur Nicolas's face, as he spoke, was full of inspiration. God turn aside all evil, and grant us happiness! But I will not forget your words, and will pray to God for you." "And so will I, father," said Edmée, deeply moved. "And I too," said Catherine. My cousins said I was bound to be happy, because I deserved to be. . . . I give all these details because now that disaster has overtaken me, I read them in my note-books with astonishment.

Next day was the 14th of July and, for the last time, I commemorated on the spot my first arrival in the town. I passed as usual through the Porte du Pont: the Dlles Meslot and Fourchot lived here, and were sitting in front of their shops doing needlework. They were surprised to see me leaving the town armed only with a staff, and called to me. But I signed to them to let me be. I came back almost immediately, after a short pause at Saint-Gervais to recollect myself and shed a few tears for Madelon and Marguerite Pâris. The young women were still more surprised to see me back so soon. "Have you forgotten anything, Monsieur Nicolas?" asked pretty Meslot. "Yes," I answered bowing, "my heart. I left it in your town, and have come back to fetch it. Have you got it?" "No," she said, pretending to be very serious. "But ask Joséphine!" "I do not know what I have done with it," said Joséphine, entering into the spirit of the thing. "My poor boy, I have lost it. It must be very slippery, for it escaped me just when I thought I had got hold of it. But ask the younger Mlle Tangis." From this I gathered that they had heard about my friendship with the butcher's pretty daughter, but not about my flirtation with Rose. Two young neighbours burst out laughing at this dialogue. "Just listen to that traveller! He is looking for his heart; he left it with Ursule, but Ursule says Joséphine has it, and Joséphine says she has lost it, but that Marianne Tangis has it; but the butcher's pretty daughter has lost it too. Perhaps you have found it, cousin?" she added turning to a pretty blonde. "Oh, fie, fie! I don't want a heart that so many people have lost. I want my heart all fresh and new; no second-hand goods for me!" On this an old woman propounded these apothegms to the pretty blonde: "An old pot makes good soup, Charlotte; a new horse often plays ball with his master; dry wood burns better than green wood; a tool works more smoothly for use; a lad who has lived, knows how to love; he who has only eaten bread, knows nought but the taste of the kneading trough; he who has handled nothing, wants to touch everything; he who has tried everything, knows what is worth the money." "Lud, mother Gauthier, what a lot you are telling us!" answered the blonde. I bowed preparatory to leaving. "Good luck!" said Ursule. "That is impossible," I answered, as I turned townwards. "You have hidden my heart, and I realise that it is for ever lost." I left the girls to their laughter, and followed the way by which I had entered Auxerre for the first time.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME

AND

END OF THE SIXTH VOLUME IN RESTIF'S EDITION

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PROJECTED BY THE AUTHOR

FOR THIS VOLUME

45. THE POKE OF SUGAR-PLUMS

Monsieur Nicolas offering a poke of sugar-plums to Ursule Meslot. Joséphine, Amatre, etc., are gathered round her. "The girl I love is called . . . the same as you."

In the background, Tonton, also taking a poke of sugar-plums, is pointing to the bed: "That is where the bride and bridegroom are to sleep." [*page 206*]

46. THE POSIES

Monsieur Nicolas in the carpenter's garden with Marianne Tangis, who is giving him a nosegay and sending the other flowers she has picked to the rest of the party. They are talking and their friends, whose heads can be seen through the lilac leaves, are listening to their conversation. "You are pretty, but that is not your greatest charm. . . . It is your character." [*page 226*]

47. PROFLIGACY

Monsieur Nicolas in the loft, where Toinette and Marote have been hanging up the linen. They are standing at a Flemish window, divided in two by a heavy pillar, and, screened by the intervening trees, are watching, themselves unperceived, Gaudet d'Arras possessing the servant, Goton Hollier, in the exterior garden of the Cordeliers. The hero is attacking Marote, who cries out and struggles on feeling herself seized. Monsieur Nicolas is looking out of the corner of his eye at a heap of scrap paper, as though thinking of throwing Marote down upon it. The latter has just let go the pillar: "Help! Help!" [*page 240*]

48. ROSE LAMBELIN

Monsieur Nicolas sitting on the grass with Rose, after she has bathed her feet, opposite to the second bastion from the Porte de Paris. He is holding her tightly round the waist, so that she reclines in his arms. She is saying: "How sweet and fresh this lawn is . . . Do you know why nature made it?" "To be crushed by happy lovers." Burat and Julie form a second loving group, while behind them Thérèse and Mme Chouin are innocently playing together. A lantern following at a distance throws a feeble light on M. Delamarre and Mlle Housset. [*page 322*]

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